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A CLERGYMAN

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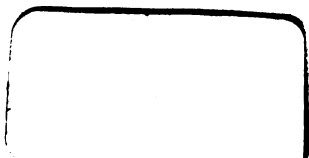
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FROM THE REQUEST OF

MRS. LOUISA J. HALL

**Widow of Edward Brooks Hall, D.D.,
Divinity School, Class of 1824**



**CONFESSIONS OF A
CLERGYMAN**



CONFESSIONS OF A CLERGYMAN

ANONYMOUS



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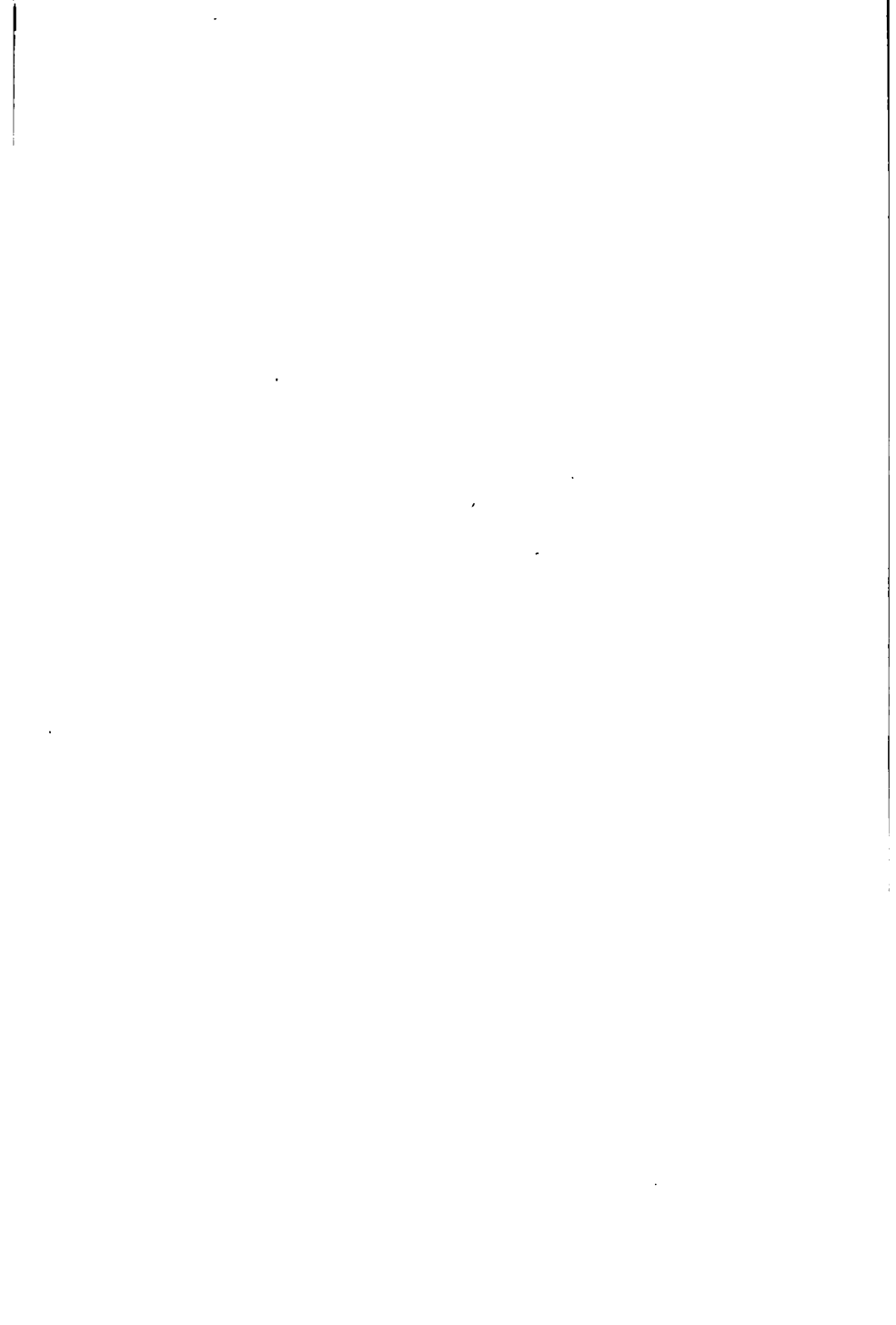
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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I WHY I DID IT	1
II MY PREPARATION — SO CALLED	19
III THE REAL THING — AND TRULY RURAL	42
IV GERTRUDE	61
V THE BURNING OF EDWARD B. ARCHER	74
VI I BRAVE THE WILD AND WOOLLY	95
VII MY LYMAN ABBOTT PERIOD	109
VIII "OUT"	129
IX BORROWED BOOTS — AND NEDDIE	143
X "THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS"	156
XI HOW I FED MY BRAIN	181
XII MY TILT WITH CHRISTIAN SCIENCE	198
XIII "THE CHURCH OF ST. CECILUS"	221
XIV A "METROPOLITAN DIVINE"	245
XV TINDER	257
XVI SMOLDERING	275
XVII FIRE	289
XVIII THE CHURCH THAT CAME BACK	311
XIX FINALLY, BRETHREN	332



**CONFESSIONS OF A
CLERGYMAN**



CONFESSIONS OF A CLERGYMAN

I

WHY I DID IT

IT was a pleasant custom while it lasted — that of prefacing a book with a portrait delicately engraved on steel. One knew, or had at least a comfortable illusion of knowing, the sort of author one had fallen in with, and he was spared the embarrassment of introducing himself.

But times have changed since then and customs along with them, till the very man who is preparing to unpack his soul in public shrinks awfully from exposing his lineaments to public gaze. Strange, is it not? Without a squirm, I write myself up in "Who's Who," with a full list of my honors and dignities, "D.D." and all. As no one rebukes my shamelessness there, why may I not risk suggesting the portrait that even I should have regarded, once in the world, as a fitting embellishment for this volume?

Personally, I should like it done in oils — on the understanding, of course, that it was not to be reproduced — and I believe that my directions to the artist would be a trifle old-fashioned. I should

2 CONFESSIONS OF A CLERGYMAN

have him paint me against a fine ecclesiastical background — at the left, the ivied, tawny-gray Parsonage; then, just behind me, the collegiate-looking gables of our Parish House; and to the right, my church, with its battlemented Gothic towers of tawny-gray stone, where the ivy has not yet climbed, but will.

As for myself, let him give me a Genevan gown, with a little square of academic purple near the place where I clutch the flowing, silken folds when my hands are not outstretched in gesture. And let him avoid making me appear too young; yesterday I completed my five-and-fortieth year. I show it. Even Gertrude, though the most tactful of wives, cannot charm that dismal fact away. Forty-five — with streaks of white about my temples — why, dear me! it is only too evident that I have reached the “dead-line” (if there is such a thing) and should knock together my poor autobiography before the bitterness of enforced retirement without pension has robbed me of the mood.

Is it indecent, picturing myself like this — as indecorous, almost, as flaunting a steel-engraved portrait? Perhaps. The time may come when my boy Ned will share the blushes of Frances and Lydia, his sisters, as they turn these pages and survey the monstrous indiscretions of Dad.

Nevertheless, I think I have begun well. In point of style, how clerical I have seemed, how conventional, how sedate! Remember it, please. For I reserve the right to cut loose on occasion, kicking my heels when I choose, or storming around in a

spasm of enraged dander, or, if the spirit moves, dropping my pen for the nonce to consume a few cookies. I told one of my ministerial brethren, the other day, that I intended writing my life, and he said, "No, take it!" But I shall not go at the performance in that temper by any means. I am for all the fun there is in it. So bear with me if, after my solemn introduction, I start afresh and with rather less sanctimony, thus:

In a jolly little book about the masses and their amusements, I remember reading of a melodrama called "His Terrible Secret; or, Esau, the Man-Monkey," and saying to myself, "Don't you imagine there are people who think you know just how Esau must have felt?" For it is pretty generally assumed among outsiders that I, too, have a "terrible secret"—namely, my profession.

Suppose, for instance, that I pick up a stranger in a Pullman or on shipboard and get to know him and like him, and then, all of a sudden, something gives me away. A pang of sympathetic grief shoots through him, and he hastens to console me by exclaiming, "What! *you* a *minister*! Well, I must say I never should have guessed it."

Now, the joke of it is, he means this kindly. So I swallow my wrath, and ask him why he thinks me such a very unusual clergyman, and quite curious are the answers he gives. I "lack the holy tone." I "avoid the brother-how's-your-soul style of hand-shake." I "have nothing of the beloved-let-us-all-rise-and-sing-that-grand-old-hymn sort of

4 CONFESSIONS OF A CLERGYMAN

gush in my manner." I am neither "smug" nor "oily" nor given to "impudent moralizing."

As these are the blessed superiorities that mark me as "exceptional," do you wonder that I burst into a great guffaw and stump him to name his "typical" clergyman? I am not too hard on him. I don't ask him to name a dozen. I ask him to name one, and for the life of him he can't fetch it. Unless he consents to flunk outright, he generally tries to save his face by stammering, "Well — er — ah — there's Chadband, you know."

To be entirely frank and honest (what's the good of writing confessions if you keep anything back?) I did know a Chadband, once. He was the "type" to perfection. But I also had the exhilaration of seeing what the ministry did to that humbug. Twelve solid years, it "laid for" him, waiting its cue. Eventually — on never mind what charges of rascality — it "got" him. And, judging by the many, many clergymen of my acquaintance and yours, he was the last of his race.

You must not conclude, however, that my chance acquaintance lets up on me when I have shunted him into a hole like this. Convinced against his will, he is of the same opinion still. I know it by the way he reopens the discussion later on and seeks to learn how such a jumping paragon of normality as myself ever came to cast in his lot with "the Chadbands."

I suppose he is looking for some mystic legend or other about a "call to preach" or possibly for an account of some thrilling inner crisis. Men

have that experience. A tinsmith I once knew "got religion" one night, and straightway began studying for the ministry. An expressman I once knew did exactly the same thing under exactly the same circumstances. A blacksmith I once knew had a brother in the ministry. The brother died. Immediately the blacksmith dropped his hammer, doused the fire in his forge, locked his smithy, and scurried off to the nearest divinity school.

And twice I have seen fellows purchased (like ball-players) for the ministry. In the one case, it was the boy's father who offered him a college education if he would become a preacher. In the other case, the deal was jammed through by a well-meaning and disinterested neighbor. Hugo at his best could hardly have done justice to the tremendously dramatic tussle those youngsters must have had making up their minds.

Moreover, I recall an instance of a man's actually getting trapped into the ministry. He had opened a law office, and, casting about for some dodge by which to advertise his existence and pick up business, hit on the Endeavor movement, and plunged into it with all the sink-or-swim desperation of a briefless tyro. It was a villainous subterfuge. He realized it. But what he failed to realize was the effect it was destined to have on him. Within a year he became an Endeavorer in willy-nilly earnest. The work captivated him so completely that he swapped off his law-books, abandoned his clients—he had three by that time—and bolted for Byefield Theological Seminary.

6 CONFESSIONS OF A CLERGYMAN

You can guess what the scoffers said. "Stung!"

These are actual cases, and I should relish recounting as strange an adventure of my own, but the truth is, I came to a decision gradually. I grew into it, little by little. Now that nearly a quarter of a century has passed since my first scuffle with the Hebrew alphabet at Byefield, I find it difficult to make out just which of many influences was most effectual in getting me there.

The earliest, I rather believe, was that of the young people's society connected with our church at home, though it gives me the creeps to recall it. A shy, awkward little coterie of very crude and very shallow boys and girls would get together in the church parlors and, with their hearts in their mouths, stand up one by one to preach or pray. We echoed the moral and spiritual maxims we had heard from our elders. We prayed imitation prayers. We blushed under our clothes while praying. It seemed to us a kind of sacrificial impropriety — an unnatural, precocious, disagreeable concession to an order of things we supposed must in some unaccountable manner be right because it was so regarded by hosts of dear people we trusted.

This is all a very long way back in the past, now. Perhaps there was more joy among the angels over our performances than I am at present inclined to think. And yet, if the tree shall be known by its fruits — well, consider. To-day, almost every one of those amateur priests and priestesses is either outside the church or conspicuous for worldliness while inside it. The artificial, premature piety led

to a reaction that might well have been foreseen.

Where was our pastor that he failed to foresee it? He disapproved; it was clear, even to us; but, instead of taking our quaint religiosity under his guidance and watching over it with fatherly patience and kindness, he kept away, probably not knowing what to do, for he was the monumental, statesmanlike type of minister, impressive in the pulpit, yet without the delicate tactfulness our situation demanded.

It was a thousand pities. It put an additional half-mile of frozen distance between him and us, and permitted what might have been a charmingly naïve institution, beneficial in every way, to become a positive detriment.

Does it seem to you odd that I count this among the influences that determined my choice of a profession? Then remember that I thought it a sacred duty in those days to attend meetings and "take part." So, when I entered college, it was a foregone fatality, my getting snapped up by the wonderfully enticing proselyters of the Y. M. C. A.

Perhaps I lay too much stress on that and what came of it. The result might have been the same even without the Y. M. C. A. For ours was a denominational college and nurtured, so far as authority could, a vast respect for religion, though I am not sure that the compulsory chapel services were altogether judicious. Witness the Sophomore yell, concluding with "Free church and compulsory beer!" Witness also the wickedness of my classmate Weatherby, who sat up nights studying

8 CONFESSIONS OF A CLERGYMAN

Bob Ingersoll and passed his days posing as a mighty reasoner, too profound to be stuffed by preachers.

Rather comical, that. For the preachers we listened to were men like Phillips Brooks, Washington Gladden, Charles Cuthbert Hall, T. T. Munger, Lyman Abbott, William Jewett Tucker, George A. Gordon, and plenty more as brilliant. Through them we got a clearer view of the ministry at its very noblest than of any other profession. As for my classmate Weatherby, he is now a Christian Scientist!

But I think the most potent influence, in my own case, was the Y. M. C. A. Although it roped me in, working upon my sense of duty, just as our young people's society had, I soon fell in love with it. It was virile, for one thing. It was spontaneous, for another. And it was genuinely democratic. The notables among us students were there — athletes, swells, honor men, and the nabobs of the college press — as well as the groundlings. If now and then some "chump" or "Lizzie boy" set out to shine at a Y. M. C. A. meeting, he found himself eclipsed quickly enough by the rugged sort.

We were crude, of course. We were immature. We lacked the penetration that comes of thinking things through from the viewpoint of experience. I remember the vague exhortation, "Come, fellows, let's be more earnest Christians!" and our petitions for "blessings," generally without the faintest notion of what we meant by "blessings." Besides, I remember our spiritual bumptiousness —

the habit of harping on "the enormous influence we were exerting whether we intended it or not," and the way we had of entreating Freshmen to "round out their lives by accepting Christ"—as if Christianity were a kind of finishing touch upon that sublime masterpiece, a Freshie!

But what do you expect of mere striplings? If we lacked profundity, we at least had vigor. We were monstrously serious. Many of us lived in a perfect sizzle of anxiety over what to make of our "careers." Several had already decided for the ministry, and burned to take others into it with them.

Toward the middle of my Junior year, I was ingeniously besieged by seven or eight young diplomats at once. They wooed me half the night, and sometimes I suspected they went home to their dormitory lairs and prayed the other half. To fan my zeal, they put me on committees. Not content with that, they got me stirred up about a curious little backwoods mission of theirs, where log-choppers and charcoal burners would assemble in a rickety red schoolhouse for a Tuesday evening service. And everlastingly they kept enthusing about Northfield—the wonderful, Pentecostal, miraculous Northfield, with its student conference, its "showers of blessings," and the amazing influence of D. L. Moody. I must surely go to Northfield.

It struck me as flattering—all this—much, much too flattering. Nothing in my make-up seemed to have destined me unequivocally for the

10 CONFESSIONS OF A CLERGYMAN

ministry. Left to myself, I might have gone into newspaper work, or teaching, or, given the chance, studied art. And yet I had tastes that made a preacher's life seem attractive. I enjoyed speaking. I wrote without effort. I loved everything churchly — the music, the liturgy, the whole, sweet, sacred, ecclesiastical atmosphere. But — but — was I worthy? I hesitated. Very probably I should never have got beyond hesitating if it had not been for Northfield.

There was a saying in those days, "Go to Northfield an unbeliever, and it will make you a Christian; go to Northfield a Christian, and it will make you a minister; go to Northfield a minister, and it will make you a foreign missionary."

As I see it now, I feel that no institution on earth can use such power indiscriminately without precipitating a tragedy of awful misfits and still more awful renunciations of solemn pledges. Suppose a pagan outsider had looked in on Northfield — an amiable pagan, I mean — a pagan with a Christian heart, like most pagans, but a thoroughly un-Christian mind. What would he have thought? That Northfield was masking a horrid fanaticism behind a pretense of frank and very boyish normality.

He would have seen the monkeyshines in the tents, the games on the athletic grounds every afternoon, the swimming matches in the river. He would have heard the barbaric college yells — delegation cheering delegation — and the hilarious student songs and simply no end of laughter.

This, he would have said, was got up by the management to provide an atmosphere of apparent wholesomeness for a red-hot religious revival, with its series of perfervid harangues by skilled evangelists every morning and evening.

He would have been wrong, of course. No such trickery existed. But was it not true that what did exist came to much the same thing in its effect? We were abnormally wrought upon under circumstances that threw us off our guard. We were taken at a disadvantage. And I protest that we were a great deal too immature to be tampered with that way. It was neither fair nor square.

And yet how romantic it was — especially those open-air gatherings at twilight on Round Top! Seated on the grass, we looked away across the wistful, winding river toward hills of melting blue, serene in the afterglow. I shall never in this life behold anything lovelier than that scene. It awakened all that was poetic in us, all that was dreamily quixotic.

There, when our mood was least capable of resistance, men and women returned from the ends of the earth told what victories awaited the soldier of the cross. Oh, the wonders we heard, the soul-searching appeals, and the echoes of that ancient cry, "Come over into Macedonia and help us!"

Little by little, the pressure increased. There was reading from the Bible—"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." There was singing—singing that quickened the pulse while it overpowered the mind. And at last

12 CONFESSIONS OF A CLERGYMAN

there was a prayer such as no youth with a heart in his breast could listen to without becoming, in spirit and at least for the moment, an apostle of the Most High — so magnetic was the voice, so tender the words, so sweet the calm joy of devotion.

Then, while the prayer continued, came a touch at one's elbow, very gently and confidently, and one felt a card slipped into one's hand. The pledge! For service, all one's life, in the foreign field!

What shall we say of it? If those who signed could keep their pledge and thereafter did keep it, I can think of no more beautiful place or time for its taking. But what of the unfit? What of those who, for reasons good or bad, broke their vow? Was not their last state worse than their first? In the neighborhood of twenty, a boy rarely understands himself, yet what a dynamo of emotion he is! A shame, then, to lay hold of him by his passion for romantic heroism, and lead him where God never meant him to go.

Stirred and all but hypnotized though I was, I somehow resisted — not in any resentful mood, however. I am thankful for Northfield. I am thankful for Round Top. It was there that I attained what is termed "consecration," and if I was not yet definitely resolved upon entering the ministry, I hesitated solely because I doubted my abilities.

The Y. M. C. A. had taken me to Northfield, and now it followed me home. In college, several

classmates of mine had recounted their vacation exploits in the slums of New York, where they had worked in rescue missions, so it was natural for me to be curious about a mission started not long before in my own city. I came, saw, and was fascinated.

I had looked for a vulgar sensationalism — the hallelujah sort of thing, roared out by a hell-fire whooper in some dowdy, malodorous chapel. What else could succeed down there?

A lot else, I found. One afternoon, a rich "society" girl had wandered into that slum by accident, and been so filled with horror and pity that she had opened this mission to the outcast and employed as its superintendent a cultivated, handsome fellow of good family and delightful manners. They had fifty converts — men of all classes, from a fallen lawyer, now redeemed, to ex-convicts. As for their methods, what more sane?

Men reclaimed from the depths of depravity would stand up and tell their stories, and then the superintendent would tell his.

He had gone into newspaper work, risen to be editor of a thriving daily, and come down through drink till he was a nameless tramp in a Bowery lodging house. He had signed the pledge and broken it, made promises and broken those. He had taken a "cure" and relapsed. He had had delirium tremens three times, twice "heavy" and once "light." He had lacked the grit, but not the inclination, to blow out his brains.

All this he told, and then how he had blundered

14 CONFESSIONS OF A CLERGYMAN

into a mission in New York, one night, and got saved. Five years had since passed, and he was still saved.

The narrative completed, he would say, "Now, if any of you boys honestly want to lead a better life, won't you come forward and kneel down while we ask God to help you?" Six or seven objects that had been men would slouch to the front of the hall and kneel before the platform during a brief and very simple prayer. With that and a benediction, the service would end.

Older and shrewder than I was then, I know that thousands of scalawags drift from city to city, their dream "a plate of beans and an old pair of pants," for which they are abundantly prepared to "love the Lord." Yet it is nevertheless undeniable that these fifty converts were real. They "stood." They were decent citizens again — or, in many a case, for the first time. They held their jobs and prospered. They got their families back. They were not only saved but saviors of others.

Naturally, I was very little use in that mission. I could help with the singing, of course, and stand outside before service-time asking "the boys" to come in. But I had no story to tell that would encourage poor wretches who believed themselves "past redemption." The summer went by, and I was as far as ever from discovering in myself a fitness for the ministry.

Still, it had appealed to me in a new way — and mightily — for I had gained a new and all but blinding conception of Christianity. To me, it

was no longer an embellishment to "round out" Freshmen. It no longer meant "showers of blessings" in the Northfield sense. It was a power. It was the biggest, strongest, most wondrous power on earth. To use it, for the reconstruction of human character—what a calling!

But could I use it? So far, no. Should I ever be able to? It seemed doubtful. It would have remained doubtful to this day, I am afraid, except for an experience I hate awfully to speak of because it grates on taste and was as questionable as it was vulgar. Let me see if I can make it appear—well, not reasonable, perhaps, but at least not wholly repugnant.

During that summer of contact with rescue work, I had read General Booth's "Darkest England," and contributed to our denominational paper an article called "The Rationale of the Salvation Army"—the first defense the movement in America ever received. Later on, I was to hear it referred to among the Byefield theologues as my "thud-and-blunder article," though I need hardly dwell upon that. My point is simply that Salvationism had awakened my interest, so that when I returned to college and learned from cronies of mine that the Christian Crusaders, an offshoot of General Booth's army, were campaigning in a mill-town near by, I was inquisitive enough to go and look on. I was not alone in this. A half-dozen of us went. And, despite some inward wriggles, as if I were portraying myself in the altogether, I mean to tell of it frankly.

16 CONFESSIONS OF A CLERGYMAN

I was charmed. Instead of working outside the Church, like Salvationists, the Crusaders worked inside the Church and for it. They were evangelists who had borrowed the Salvationist devices — a uniform in which blue replaced the red Guernsey; a free use of the tambourine, though not of drums; the testimonies, the hallelujahs, the “catchy” songs, and the dauntless approach to “sinners” one by one in the pews where they sat.

Judging by her treatment of the girl preacher in “Adam Bede,” I suppose George Eliot would have found this very beautiful, and I may add that it seemed so to me. Surely nothing could have been more picturesque. I can see it now — the brightly lighted church, the little band of Christian soldiers on the platform, and a thronged congregation of Welsh mill-folk filling the very aisles. And I can hear those magnificent Welsh voices. In chorus singing, no other nationality under heaven can match them.

How like Northfield it all was, and how like the rescue mission, and at the same time how unlike either! Northfield had been a Y. M. C. A. affair, its adherents already converted. The mission had been a place where only a saved drunkard could gain results, as he alone had a story to tell. Here Christians were at grips with rough, ignorant, pagan worldliness, and any Christian — we college boys, if we chose — could join in the tussle.

So — join we did.

Oh, yes, it was scandalously vulgar! The War-Whoop (or whatever the Crusaders called their

rabid journal), came out with a picture of us labeled (perhaps I ought rather to say libeled) "the Gospel Six." But while it was vulgar, it was splendid, and I cannot think of it even now without a thrill. Mere boy that I was, I made lewd rowdies and hoidenish girls consent to strive for a sweeter, cleaner life.

God forgive me if I did harm by importuning over-much. God pity the poor, weak, stupid converts if they slumped back, afterward, into their sordid ways. I shudder, sometimes, when I recall what fatalities hung upon my inexperience; and yet I end always by believing that the good we did far exceeded the mischief, if mischief there was.

You see, of course, why I tell of this. It is because then, for the first time, I felt the surge of power within me. If my religion had been perfunctory in our young people's society, and a living joy in the Y. M. C. A., and a passion at Northfield, and—later on, in the rescue mission—a thing wonderful and tremendous, yet a thing I could not impart, here at last it had become an active, glowing force—a means of swaying others.

Choose the ministry? Why—bless you!—it had chosen me. I was a minister already. So were the six of us—ministers all. We proved it by carrying the revival into neighboring villages. What the Crusaders had accomplished in the mill-town we ourselves accomplished elsewhere.

It was then that I let it be known among my friends that I was to matriculate as a divinity student at Byfield the following Autumn. A few

18 CONFESSIONS OF A CLERGYMAN

sneered — notably our leading atheist, who is now an Eddyite. A few others seemed, so to speak, to have their hands full keeping their mouths shut. As for the rest, how sympathetic were their shining faces! Old cronies congratulated me. Girls I knew said it was “beautiful.” My Mother — dear soul! — was filled with solemn gratitude and pride. And I — you can’t begin to think how happy I was.

Well, how does all this appear to the sort of fellow I pick up in a Pullman or on shipboard and whose exclamation of “What! *You a minister!*” annoys and amuses me so? I have kept nothing back. I have told him frankly how I “came to cast in my lot with the Chadbands.” Although peculiar in certain details, mine was on the whole the common experience. Can he understand it?

I think he can. More than that, I think the same influences might have affected him precisely as they have affected us ministers. Or if not, he is anything but the chap I take him for.

II

MY PREPARATION — SO CALLED

NEVERTHELESS, it was with a pretty keen sense of the ridiculous that I repaired to that "institute of sacred learning" on "Zion's Hill" at Byefield-on-the-Hudson the following September.

I was in earnest about the ministry — hugely in earnest, as you have seen — yet this pollywog stage, in which I was to be neither priest nor layman, but a half-fledged mixture of both, struck me as a kind of game. I recalled what Chicago's Mrs. Malaprop once remarked at a fancy-dress party: "Here comes my husband in the garbage of a monk."

On reaching the Seminary, however, I was charmed with its antique grace and dignity, and no wonder; for nearly a hundred years, its venerable gray barracks had stood, grouped about a noble Independence-Hall-looking recitation building and surrounded with immemorial elms. I was reminded of Whitman's lines:

"Why are there trees I never walk under
But large and melodious thoughts descend upon
me."

And yet it seemed a bit doubtful if "large and

20 CONFESSIONS OF A CLERGYMAN

melodious thoughts" were descending upon the theologues I beheld there. With all due respect, what "jays"!

Think of dangling locks, of "high-water pants," and of shiny Prince Alberts combined with yellow shoes, and you have at least some faint understanding of my dismay. It was as if twenty colleges, if not forty, had been combed for "chumps." With shame I remembered what I had so often heard (and denied indignantly) — that "only inferior young men" took to the ministry. Was it true, after all?

Here my pride asserted itself, and I strolled about, like Diogenes with his lantern, looking for a man, and, unlike Diogenes, determined to find several.

This worked. Though the rule held, apparently, I observed numerous exceptions — fine, breezy, civilized chaps, who nodded pleasantly as I passed them and who had an air not only of breeding but of first-class ability. In as many minutes, I counted six Phi Beta Kappa keys. And as I scanned the "jays" more observantly, I saw that what had the outward look of barbarism was in reality nothing worse than rustic uncouthness hard up for "store-clothes." Gawks could be gentlemen — under their skins. I knew it. Why not assume that even the funniest would eventually grow skins worthy of their profession?

Accordingly, I resolved to forget the shiny Prince Alberts and yellow shoes, and chum up with my new associates like a jolly good fellow.

Certainly, we had enough in common. Here we were, Christian brethren, with a single, splendid, all-absorbing purpose—to fit ourselves for the ministry.

Within an hour, the process began—how agreeably you shall hear.

My class assembled for its first encounter with Greek exegesis under Professor Bailey. After a prayer, as if opening a service, the snowy-haired, saintly-looking doctor of divinity plunged into a discussion of the Gospel According to St. Matthew.

I say plunged because he got to work so promptly, but nothing could have surpassed the calm, composed, almost surgical amiability with which he proceeded to disembowel Matthew.

Inspiration? The validity of Holy Writ? The Bible as the Word of God? Not a vestige of those “antiquated ideas” was to remain. The supernatural? Well, here and there a smidge of it perhaps, though on sufferance and with apologies to the German critics. For instance:

Given a specific case of the supernatural, how many witnesses were there? How far could we trust their honesty? How closely did their reports agree? How near were they to the scene? How level were their heads at the time? Was it day or night? If night, was there a moon? How long a period elapsed between the event and the first written record of it? Were there men then living who could have disproved the story if false? And which, if any, of “the best German critics” condescended to listen to it without sneering?

22 CONFESSIONS OF A CLERGYMAN

Think of it! After Northfield, after the rescue mission, and after my campaign with the brave, trusting, simple-hearted Crusaders — this! It sounded monstrously like the sputterings of my college classmate Weatherby, the Bob-Ingersollite who is now a Christian Scientist.

So I was not surprised when "Tad" Jenks, older than most of us and gifted with a reckless belligerency, blurted out, "But Professor! I have always loved to think —"

"Mr. Jenks," said Dr. Bailey, cutting him short, yet with an amused and very paternal smile, "it is not what we love to think, it is what we ought to think. We are here to determine truth. Now, as I was saying, the consensus of opinion among the best German critics —"

And so it went. "Determining truth," it was called, and by a saintly-looking doctor of divinity with snow-white hair. Instead of the ancient Beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," it seemed that we must learn a new one: "Blessed are the German critics, for theirs is the monopoly of truth." It was in this curious fashion, then, that we were to be fitted for the ministry.

Fitted! Why not say unfitted?

When I look back, after all these years, and recall the troubled faces of my classmates that day, is it any wonder that I attribute to this new Beatitude the strange course their lives have taken or that I am reminded of the lines,

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“Hans Breitmann gif a barty —
Vare iss dot barty now?”

and of the answer, “Avay in de Ewigkeit.”

Benton runs a chicken-ranch now, Hunt practises law — divorces a specialty. Parker writes editorials. Williams, after going over to the Unitarians, has become a broker; Chalmers, Bentham, Hodge, and Patterson are teaching. Of the rest, some are in business, a few connected with social work, a few more employed as librarians or literary hacks or life-insurance agents. Barely a handful are preaching.

What checked my impulse to cut and run, after that harrowing first lecture of Dr. Bailey's, I have never quite understood. His endearing personality, I sometimes think, and then there are times when I think a sort of morbid fascination beset me — an inquisitiveness to discover how on earth a man of his stamp could be the three-quarters skeptic he was and still call himself a minister of the gospel.

But perhaps what enabled me to keep my hair on was realizing that there were several dozen of us in the class and that, if we were on the wrong tack altogether, somebody would be pretty sure to find it out. Like as not, somebody already had, so why not wait and see?

I waited, and as we strolled out across the campus after class, I kept my ears open. I heard little, though. Everybody seemed bewildered, and

24 CONFESSIONS OF A CLERGYMAN

ashamed, and shocked, and timorously mum. I suppose I should have cornered one of my old college cronies presently, and had a heart-to-heart pow-wow with him, had not a Byefield Senior I used to know at home happened along just then and cornered me.

"Why, hello!" said he. "How sick you look, Jim! Higher Criticism too much for you?"

With that, he asked me up to his room, and we talked for a solid hour. Yes, mine had been the common experience. You got "knocked silly" at first. For a year, maybe, you "didn't know where you were at." But this was the right way, nevertheless, if you had the spunk to "stick it out." It "made you a thinker." To quote him straight, "At Princeton, they teach you *what* to think; here they teach you *how* to think."

Curiously, my room-mate, Jack Ainsworth, had had a similar talk with another Upper-Classman, and when I joined him in our den, we compared notes, the upshot being, "Br-r-r-r!" We both of us felt like creatures from some warm, delicious, sunny climate suddenly plunged into an Arctic drift to our very chins and at dead of night with no moon. But we would "stick it out." It was "the way." And in our hearts we prayed — prayed — that the dear Christ we so loved would not hide His face from us.

Fortunately — or ought I instead to say unfortunately? — there was work at hand, work enough to occupy our distracted wits and keep us from brooding. A notice on the bulletin-board in the

recitation-hall had directed us to prepare for our first lesson in Hebrew under Professor Childs.

Why Hebrew? I never thought to raise the question, at the time. All ministers knew Hebrew, I supposed. I was unaware that one of the most influential ministers of that day or this never so much as tackled the Hebrew alphabet, and, for that matter, was never inside a theological seminary. My doubts as to the indispensability of that atrocious language set in later, when I found out that the Byefield students generally chucked it — how disgustedly, you may imagine — at the end of a year.

And what earthly good is a year of it? Really to master Hebrew, you must give your life to it. And then you have wasted your life.

Think of a language written in consonants from right to left, with the vowels indicated by points stuck under the consonants, or alongside them, or inside, or on top! Think of a language that has not the faintest resemblance to Latin or Greek or German or any other tongue you ever encountered in all your born days! Think of a verb with seven "voices"! Hebrew is as much harder than Greek as Greek is harder than French.

I put a year of heart-breaking drudgery on Hebrew, and what have I to show for it? I recollect that the word for "blood" is *dam* and that the word for "tent" is *ohel*, as those were standing jokes at Byefield then and probably are still. I have vague memories of the verb *Kawtal* — or was it *Kattail*, or perhaps *Koattail*? I remember the first three

words of the Hebrew Bible, "B'reshith bara Elohim," and they are mighty handy when peddlers call. The world is so constituted that, if accosted with "B'reshith bara Elohim" in the right tone, a pedler runs for his life. And sometimes, when my neighbor in the trolley-car is reading a Yiddish newspaper, I can make out its title — a German name written in Hebrew from right to left with all the vowels omitted. Finally, I am great at deciphering the consonants *Kaph*, *shin*, *resh* that represent *Kosher* on the sign of a Jewish restaurant.

Beyond this, nothing!

But suppose I had "elected" Hebrew and gone on with it three entire years; what then? Ah, then, I should be able to make blundering translations of passages that are already accessible in English — the English, that is, of the best Hebraists living or dead!

So I say the time we spent on Hebrew was sheer waste. I go further, even. I declare that it was a wicked waste. With so brief a period separating us from the solemn responsibilities of a parish, what a crime to fool away any of it!

And honestly it seems to me that the fooling away of precious weeks and months was the leading industry at Byefield. Why did we give a whole term, later on, to the hair-splitting distinctions between Homoeans, Homousians, and Home Lyonsians, as we called them in fun? Those were red-hot issues, a cartload of centuries ago. To-day — well, hardly! Raking them over was as idiotic, from a modern and practical point of view, as our

minute and painstaking long-drawn studies in Buddhism, Mohammedanism, Taoism, Shintoism, Parseeism, and the rest of that curious Midway. We should have extracted as much profit (more, perhaps) if we had taken notes on the classic harangue, "Passing on to the next cage, I present to your patronizing gaze, Zuzu, the Wild Girl, captured in the Everglades of Borneo"—and so on.

Meanwhile, just consider the indispensable treasures of knowledge we left almost untouched! We were not mastering our King James Bibles. We were not mastering the life of Christ. We were not mastering Christian morals. We were not mastering the Psychology of religion. We were not so much as considering that finest, deepest, and most delicate of arts—the art known as "soul-winning." Actually, I believe that "Happy Harry," captain of the Crusaders, knew more about that than Professor Bailey did. And we were not learning to preach.

Instead, we were "studying" elocution—not the sort of thing the little girl defined as "the way they put to death in some states," but a daily drill, the whole pack of us together, in massed formation like the Germans at Liège. Its only object was "voice-culture."

And what was the seminary doing to our characters, all this while? One morning, shortly after our arrival, a Senior dropped in on Jack and me, and asked how we were fixed for socks and underwear.

I thought he must be out of his head, and I rather

28 CONFESSIONS OF A CLERGYMAN

imagine I showed it, for he laughed and, helping himself to a chair, hastened to explain. He was acting as the Faculty's agent in disposing of the income from a fund a Byefield maiden lady had left, some eighty years before, to provide the theologues with pills. As the demand for pills had ceased, for the most part, thanks to an improvement of their insides, it was now thought proper to lay out the interest by attending to their outsides. If Jack and I wanted flannels and socks, here was the chance of a life-time!

Half in fun, we took them. Why not? Refusal would accomplish nothing. The money was there, to be invested in eleemosynary duds for theologues, and would lie idle if they balked.

Still, it meant a downward step, to be followed by another before the week was out. Word went forth that applications were in order for "aid."

Aid! Many a time I had dropped a coin in the contribution plate at church when our pastor had announced that the "offering" that Sunday was "for the maintenance of indigent divinity students." But it had never entered my head that one day I myself was to be numbered among them. Aid! The thought of it cut like a knife. I railed at aid — till an Upper Classman overheard and enquired how I expected to pull through without it.

I had my bank-book in my pocket, and whipped it out. It had been written up only a fortnight before and not drawn upon since, and the balance to my credit was enough to satisfy the most supercilious Upper Classman in Byefield — or so I thought.

He looked at it, and smiled. Despite the suite of furnished rooms rent-free and despite free tuition and the reduced charge for provender at a subsidized table, my wealth was not nearly sufficient. "Better pocket your scruples," he advised.

"Hanged if I will!" I retorted, though with a suspicion that maybe I should have to, for all that.

Before settling the matter finally, I went and laid my case before Professor Bailey, whose counsel I felt I should be justified in accepting.

"My boy," said he, "take every copper you can get, and, if you think there's any chance of success, beg for more. This isn't mendicancy. It's a demand for pay — the return you deserve for letting the church catch you young, as it insists on doing, and for facing the risk of getting awfully fleeced by and by. You theologues aren't in the same position as students of law or medicine. The world expects them to wait, and earn money, and pay for their education. It can wait for their services. It agrees to pay a handsome price for them when the time comes — all they are worth, if not more. The church doesn't promise any such lavish emoluments and the church can't wait. It wants you for the seminary now, and it makes up for its failings at other points by offering you 'aid.' Accept it — as advance salary. The day will come when you will wish there had been twenty times as much of it."

I shall not attempt to assail these contentions here. Elsewhere, perhaps, I may question the wisdom of a church that subsidizes its seminaries in order to obtain immature preachers and wearies

30 CONFESSIONS OF A CLERGYMAN

of them when experience has ripened their faculties. I may even go the length of arguing that the cause of Christ in America would be quite notably advanced if young gentlemen were required to work at secular tasks, some few years, before entering the seminary. We should have more practical ministers then, I believe, and there would be less risk of their lapsing into a pathetic obsolescence at forty-five. But what I want to show at present is the effect of "aid" on the man.

I took Professor Bailey's advice. I took the "aid." And I took the consequence—a slight lowering of self-respect and an unfortunate tampering with my sense of business integrity. To this day, I feel I am doing something virtuous when I pay a bill. I know better, yet the feeling remains. It is a great-great-grandchild of "aid."

Just to show you what the upsetting of normal business relations can do to a man, let me tell you about Hendricks. Toward the end of Senior Year, he enquired if I had asked the railroad for a ministerial half-fare. When I said I hadn't, he asked why. I said, "I don't like the principle."

"What!" exclaimed Hendricks. "Would you give twenty dollars for a principle?" And he was an excellent fellow, too.

I think, however, that "aid" damaged us still more regrettably in the way it degraded us in the eyes of the Byefield villagers. Not sharing Professor Bailey's point of view, they called us "the mendicant friars." And I submit that it is anything but a tonic to be looked down upon like that

for three years of one's youth. As regards business slackness, a man can pull himself up with a round turn, and reform in five minutes, but if he has felt sheepish for three miserable years, how is he to regain the fine, vigorous, dauntless sense of solid worth that alone can fit him for leadership?

Oh, well, we ministers do regain it, somehow, though I wish with all my heart that we had never lived under a cloud! We should be better ministers to-day, just as we should be better ministers if we had never lived in an atmosphere of intellectual craftiness.

In the Byefield of my day, with its subservience to "the best German critics," there was a general anxiety as to how a parish would take it when we set about preaching "truth." I learned that we must be "diplomatic." Once, in the midst of a lecture on Systematic Theology, Professor Raymond looked up from his manuscript, and remarked, "Young gentlemen, there is any amount of dynamite in what I have just said. Be prudent. Don't use the terms I am using now, or your parishioners will scent heresy. There is no need of that. Use the old-fashioned, orthodox terms, and they won't see what you are up to."

This sort of thing impressed me as a shade too foxy, and yet it was evident that the Seminary approved. Why not? The Seminary had swallowed bigger camels than that. For instance:

When our new professor of Biblical Theology was inducted into his sacred office, the venerable president of the Board of Trustees read aloud the ancient

32 CONFESSIONS OF A CLERGYMAN

creed the institution's founders had established as its cornerstone. He then administered an oath in which the professor bound himself to teach that creed in its entirety and to teach nothing in any way conflicting with it. We heard the oath taken. We saw the professor dip pen in ink and affix his signature to the creed. Then, as if nothing had occurred, he launched forth upon an inaugural address that gave me the shivers. What with higher criticism, evolution, and a cynical pseudo-Unitarian contempt for orthodoxy, it knocked that creed into a cocked hat.

The professor died within a month, and there were villagers who said it was God's vengeance.

Once in a blue moon at least, the Seminary spirit broke out even more amazingly. Oral examinations used to be held, in the presence of the Board of Visitors, and one day Professor Raymond called up Gavin MacNaughton to discuss the nature of Scripture. Said Gavin, "The Bible contains history, biography, poetry, wisdom literature, and also myth and legend."

"Myth and legend!" thundered one of the visitors. "Young man! What do you mean by myth and legend?"

Gavin told him. Whereupon Professor Raymond, rising with a most conciliatory smile, said to the visitors, "Gentlemen, this is news to me," and there was a roar of laughter, and Gavin sat down a thoroughly humiliated theologian.

I have two comments to add to this. First, everything Gavin had said was quoted word for word

from Raymond's own lectures. Second, far from condemning Raymond, the theologues condemned Gavin — for "giving away the Seminary."

A strange atmosphere, you will say, pervaded our "institute of sacred learning," and you will wonder why we theologues "stood for" it. Why, indeed? Let me see if I can explain.

To us, the Byefield position had come to represent "truth," and if reactionaries outside were "laying for" us, they were laying for "truth" also, so that we must be "wise as serpents" and have what I have since caught myself describing as "the caution of our convictions." Otherwise, there would be ructions, uncomfortable for us and giving "truth" an additional black eye.

Poor "truth"! Poor Byefield! Poor us! Thanks to "the best German critics" and the spirit of that ridiculous period, we were trying to substitute sight for faith and to rationalize the "spiritual things" that are "spiritually discerned." We thought it "the way." We were "sticking it out."

Now, for the great bulk of the Byefield theologues, sticking it out was comparatively easy; they were engaged to be married. Every fresh tussle with the "Homelyousians" or the verb *Kawtal* or "the best German critics" brought them just so much nearer their wedding day. And I suppose that when a theologian got "knocked silly" by the overdose of warmed-over Heidelberg, he thought of his girl. Before long, she and not Heidelberg would be his spiritual guide. Perhaps her letters brought the sunshine of a living faith when "truth"

34 CONFESSIONS OF A CLERGYMAN

was at its darkest. But to me it was a horrid plight, this getting "knocked silly." I had no girl.

After two wretched, dazed, futile years of it, the condition my Upper Classman from home had predicted set in. I "didn't know where I was at."

If you insist on exactness, I had not known "where I was at" for many a long month — morally or spiritually or theologically — but what I mean to say is, there came a moment when I woke up and realized the mess inside my mind and heart.

At luncheon one noon I happened to be afflicted with a glum, silent mood, of the sort that had grown upon me, and listened to the conversation without taking part in it. Within a short space, these were the things I heard.

Robinson said to Williams, "What's your thesis about, old man?"

"The Limitations of Jesus," said Robinson.

Presently the fellows got to discussing Professor Bentley. "I asked him point blank," remarked Starr, "and he said he endorsed the vision theory of the Resurrection."

After a few moments, young Sawyer shoveled a knife-load of beans into his mouth and observed, apropos of some new turn the chatter had taken, "I reject the Trinity."

I think it was the beans on Sawyer's knife that woke me up. At all events, I got a shock that brought me face to face with what I have sometimes called the "intellectual vulgarity" of Byefield. The mission had been vulgar, perhaps. The Crusaders had been frankly, splendidly vulgar. But

this arrogant, conceited, glib handling of sacred things by Germanized professors and half-baked "thinkers" was vulgarity run mad. Truth! I had had my fill of "truth."

I was decent enough not to get up and leave the table, but I was resolved on flight, nevertheless. I would leave Byefield, and never come back while I lived — at least, such was my determination at the moment, and I acted on it to the extent of walking away alone after luncheon and heading for the open country, not knowing where I went nor caring. Purely by chance, I took the road across Flagstaff Hill.

Reaching the top, I sat down on a stone wall and thought. What I thought, matters little. But what I saw, as I looked eastward, matters a lot. Yonder, at the foot of the long slope, nestled the old, square farmhouse where Dr. Pierson Howard had taken up his abode after returning from his forty years of labor as a missionary in Siam.

I had never met him, but it seemed to me that a man like Dr. Howard would listen to my woes and tell me what course I ought to follow. Wasn't I as heathen — or at any rate as muddled — as the densest native in the Land of the White Elephant? Couldn't I rely on the Doctor's sympathy? Was it not right, considering the kind of man he was, to leave the whole matter to him?

I shall never forget the talk we had, or Dr. Howard's patient, fatherly, shrewd efforts to understand my difficulties, or the perfectly confident air he had in dealing with them, once he comprehended.

"My boy," he said, "you must leave Byefield, for the present — let me be more definite and say for a year. Directly after Commencement, clear out. Forget the Seminary. Let things settle. Then, when you've found yourself, come back. The Senior Year at Byefield won't hurt you. The fact is, you are past the worst of it now. Take time, wait till you've regained your balance, and meanwhile try and live as normal a life as you can."

I am not quoting him word for word, or attempting to; I am merely summing up what he said, and I believe you will appreciate his wisdom — and mine in doing as he told me to.

Sometimes I refer to my truancy from Byefield as my year of "wandering in the wilderness," and yet I wandered profitably, almost as if the year had been planned out with a view to its formative influence. Falling heir to two hundred dollars, I sailed for England in the second-cabin along with a mixed rabble from the New England mill-towns, and the insight I got into their lives has been of the utmost value to me ever since. So have the weeks I spent at Balliol House, one of the Toynbee buildings in Whitechapel, and my contact with men like Percy Alden, of Mansfield House, and the Rev. A. F. Winnington Ingram, who was then engaged in social work in the East End and developing the abilities that were to make him Lord Bishop of London. Besides, I acquired in England a new feeling for what the Bible calls "the beauty of holiness." Westminster, Ely, Peterborough, York, Lincoln, Durham — oh, the hours of awed, thrilled reverence

I passed beneath their vaulted roofs! And when I returned to America, it was to enlist for service in the "social wing" of a great institutional church, where I gained a first-hand knowledge of the poor and their problems. Finally, quite by accident, I drifted into teaching. My brief career as an instructor in elementary psychology afforded me an acquaintance with youngsters and the wits thereof. I taught them something, I hope, but they taught me infinitely more.

And yet, when summer came once more, it was still true that I didn't know "where I was at." I had not "found myself." Things had not "settled." I was in doubt about Byefield, in doubt about the ministry, in doubt about my own soul. I "wandered in the wilderness," with no apparent prospect of arriving at any worthy or satisfying goal. I was a spiritual hobo, as complete a waif, mentally, as the derelicts at the rescue mission.

Strange to say, it was the mission that brought me to my senses, and the way it took was strange beyond words, and the working of my mind under the stress of shock and grief so strange that I shall not attempt to account for it. I shall merely tell what occurred. Make of it what you can.

You remember my telling of the rich girl who founded the mission and employed as its superintendent a handsome, cultivated fellow of good family and delightful manners — the redeemed outcast whose story was the corner-stone of the mission's success. People looking on had said, "She will marry him yet," and they were right. She

38 CONFESSIONS OF A CLERGYMAN

married him at about the time I began wandering in the wilderness. Her friends shuddered, of course, and I confess to some misgivings of my own — at first. But the misgivings vanished when I saw the lovely home she made for him and how she bound him more firmly than ever to the brave, clean life he had led consistently for years.

As I write of it, I suppose you are saying it was they who piloted me back toward the calling I had chosen and all but abandoned hope of entering. Well, so it was.

One afternoon the postman brought a note — from her. I opened it, expecting another invitation to dine with them. This is what I read:

"Dear Jim:

"Can you come to us in trouble? Arthur has fallen. But we have found him, and all will now be well.

Faithfully,

"KATE."

Everything reeled and swam and blackened before me. If I had been struck by lightning, it would have been nothing to this — oh, nothing at all! I rushed to my room, and fell upon my knees beside my bed, and, between sobs, prayed my heart out. I was thinking not only of Arthur — poor, broken hero! — and of his wife, but of those scores of converts, from beneath whose feet the very earth had dropped away, and of the disaster to rescue work the country over, and of — yes, myself!

For Arthur's salvation had been the chief but-

tress of my faith. My world — my Heaven, even — seemed torn asunder. I wished I was dead — and Arthur, too, and Kate. And then of a sudden, a perfectly irrational thing happened. At the moment when salvation appeared proved a hoax, behold, it was truer than ever! I believed, and with a new might and a new courage and a new, clear-sighted trust. All the old, simple-hearted, glad zest returned in an instant. When I rose from my knees, I knew that I was to be a minister, and no feeble one at that.

I don't understand it. I don't pretend to. And I wonder if anybody can. Was it because shock had swept Byefield out of my consciousness completely? Or because the old philosopher was right in calling religion a "sense of dependence"? Or because Kate had appealed to me in trouble, mere boy though I was, and thrown upon my wretched shoulders a responsibility they stiffened to meet? For the life of me, I can't say.

I ran out of the house, and hurried to Kate and Arthur, and I stood by them through the awful days that followed, little guessing that worse were in store — infinitely worse. So far, his downfall was comprehensible. He had gone out alone in quest of a fallen convert, and had pursued him into a saloon. Old sights, old sounds, old smells, had revived the old passion for drink. Arthur succumbed. But who would have imagined that, after getting on his feet again, and proving his sincerity, and starting afresh in a new mission in another

city, he was to collapse once more and die of alcoholic pneumonia? Kate's death followed Arthur's within a month.

I was back at Byefield then, and when the news came, it had the same effect as before, only stronger, even warming the icy atmosphere of the Seminary and offsetting the influence of our search for "truth."

Truth! I had found truth already. The "consensus of the best German critics" seemed ridiculous now, and the ratiocinations of our "thinkers" silly beyond words. I no longer tried to substitute sight for faith. My faith needed no proofs — or rather, it was its own proof. I was impatient for ordination, and a parish, and work, the harder the better. If I had returned to Byefield, it was not because I valued the lectures inflicted upon us during Senior Year, but simply because I wanted my credentials as "a full-armed soldier of the cross," such being the innocent view outsiders took of the Byefield graduates.

It was a happy year, despite my impatience. Pastoral Theology, Homiletics, and Church History, though hardly fitting me for the ministry, at least refrained from unfitting me for it; and, dropping back a class, I fell in with chaps considerably less cynical than the bumpkin who "rejected the Trinity" while eating with his knife. Besides, there were monkeyshines — a huge relief in a monastery like ours, and good for the soul. It was then that I assisted in founding the He Gimel Wau — pronounced Hay Ghimmel Wow — a Hebrew let-

ter society combined with a highly farcical celibate order.

At the close of the year, I and four others were “ordained to the ministry at large” in the Seminary Chapel, and, the very next day, came a “call.”

III

THE REAL THING — AND TRULY RURAL

PPRIVATE MULVANEY, who was “a corpril wanst but rayjooiced aftherwards,” is quoted by Mr. Kipling as saying, “No more will I name places, for a man is thracked by a place.”

Accordingly, you will gain little by searching the “B’gosh Belt” of New England for the “taown o’ Thorpe” (population 350) where I supplied the pulpit for four Sundays preceding my ordination to the ministry at large. I should hate to be “thracked,” for I mean to be frank about Thorpe. It should never have been built. Lost among the hills, where farming by machinery is out of the question, it has been drained of its best people for years and years by the thriving valley-towns and the still more thriving West. All the plucky, ambitious, aggressive spirits have got out. It is a victim of natural selection the wrong end to — i. e., the survival of the unfittest.

And yet how amusing! When I alighted from the train at West Thorpe, one chilly Saturday evening in May, the station was dark, and the only vehicle in sight a rickety, mud-spattered buggy, whose driver got down from his perch and said to me, “Be you the minister?” On my acknowl-

edging that I was the next thing to a minister and doubtless the man he sought, he said, "I'll carry you over." I hopped in, and, after taking off his nag's blanket and folding it, he looked up at me and said, "Highst!"

I hesitated, not understanding.

"Highst!" he repeated. "Highst up, so's I can put this here blanket on the seat."

That was my first impression of Thorpe, and it tickled me as hugely, almost, as a joke of "Mo" Glenn's after church next day.

The service had been enlivened by the funniest tenor solo I had ever heard, and "Mo" Glenn, at whose house I was entertained, said to me, "Haow did you like Uncle Ed's solo?"

"Well," I replied, "he hasn't what you would call a cultivated voice."

Whereupon, "Mo" retorted, "Dunno 'baout that! Saounds to me as if he'd been over it at least once with a harrow."

You see the sort of place Thorpe was — a regular story-book village, brimming with fun and dialect and "character" — so quaint and comical, indeed, that I felt like exclaiming, "Lawk-a-massy on us, this is none of I!" I have a queer, dishonest sensation as I write of it, even now, half persuaded that I was never there and that the "taown" itself never existed, for, like many another grim reality, it was much too good to be true.

At the time, I had not the faintest notion of settling in Thorpe, although it had charms enough

44 CONFESSIONS OF A CLERGYMAN

in addition to its humor. There were magnificent woods where the little red fox loved to hide, and a lake strewn with lily-pads and edged with rippling reeds for the red-winged blackbirds to light upon, and hills where the Puritan pioneers kept watch against Indians. Along the straggling road, some eighty farms stretched hither and yon, with ancient eave-less houses shingled at the ends and enormous barns tilted askew by the lapse of time and curiously crinkly as to sky-line. "Mo," himself, ran a farm—or, to put it more exactly, walked one.

Besides, what a church! Not much to look at—in fact, only the shabbiest of steepled white "meet-in'-haouses," well dappled with weather-drip inside—and yet how filled to overflowing with eager listeners, "a noble army, men and boys," as the hymn says, not to mention the women-folks!

In Thorpe, it appeared that church-going was the one prosperous industry, a preacher the biggest man on earth, a sermon the event of the week. Thorpe had not changed appreciably since the good old days of Jonathan Edwards. "Bully for Thorpe!" I cried inwardly. "This is simply grand."

Oh, grand indeed! After service, the third Sunday, "Bill" Glenn waylaid me with a question suggested by my discourse a fortnight before. Typical Thorpean that he was, Bill had been chewing that discourse like a cud ever since.

So you see why it was that I had no intention of settling in Thorpe. The work was too attrac-

tive. It looked easy, ridiculously easy, and I wanted something tough—a slum parish, say, or a church in some pagan mill-town, where I could evangelize the fellows Mr. Spooner has termed our horny-handed “tons of soil.” And yet I was not wholly unaware that possibly Thorpe had designs on me. Coaxing me up there, Sunday after Sunday, was a bit of a give-away. A “call” might come of it, like as not, and—why, what could I do but decline?

How little I realized the sweetly palavery nature of a “call”! When it came, the morning after my ordination to the ministry at large, it took me by storm—the cordiality of it, I mean, and the proof it gave of those dear people’s confidence in me and my untried abilities. It was the proudest moment of my life, and at the same time the humblest. Beautiful faces of aged women, and of men who had toiled and suffered and trusted all their days, came before me, touching in their rustic simplicity. Who was I, to preach to such souls as theirs—I, a raw fledgling, barely twenty-six years old?

True, it was not much of a call—a mere engagement for a year was what it proposed—but it was an honor, nevertheless, and only the more so because of the quaint phrasing in which I was entreated to “except the pasturage” at a salary of six hundred dollars “and the parsonage.”

I “excepted”—what else could I do?—and pitched in with unlimited boyish enthusiasm before the week was out, not in the least fidgeted by

the prospect of an income bounded on the north by six hundred dollars, on the south by "the parsonige," and on both east and west by invisible (though horribly real) interrogation points indicating that maybe the church would pay up and maybe not.

As for the "parsonige," a family of tenants inhabited the old ark, and I turned in the rent to the church treasury, thus becoming the largest subscriber to my own salary. What risk in that? Hadn't I six hundred dollars left?

I know it looks sordid — this keen interest of mine in money matters — but you will see, presently, why I go into the details still further and speak of what I paid for board. Thorpe quartered me at the "Iry" Brants', and, thanks to Mrs. Iry's appreciation of my greenness, she was enabled to charge nearly twice the normal figure. Then, to prevent my escape when I saw through the little game, she spread terror among the housewives of Thorpe by telling how "dainty" I was, so that nobody else would consent to feed me. And at the end of six months, it was Mrs. Iry who invited my tenants out of the "parsonige" in order to rent them a picturesque ruin she owned.

I was furious, of course, but my wrath changed soon enough to a mood of grotesque and very refreshing hilarity — such a joke it seemed, the way Thorpe treated me. Besides, I began to see that what had looked too easy to be worth tackling, at first, might yet turn out a pretty soul-trying experience. Thorpe challenged the "sport" in me.

Better still, it appealed to me as strangely needy—a town all askew, morally, and therefore to be loved in somewhat the spirit one loves an attractive but wayward and misguided child.

This was jumping to conclusions, of course. Who knew but that Mrs. Iry was the one exception to a rule of universal rectitude? Patience! I would wait, and see.

Well, I waited, and I saw, and I saw some wonderfully agreeable things. I had not been mistaken in my original impressions concerning Thorpe as a citadel of piety, and the piety was real—undeniably real. Thorpe crowded the church every Sunday morning and the “hall” every Sunday evening. When prayer-meeting night came, a throng came also. It was glorious. And my house-to-house visitation was a continual delight. I found myself the most looked up to and I may almost say the most influential man in all the countryside—a power, actually, despite my youth and inexperience. It went to my head, this amazing success, and, looking at it from my own private viewpoint, I am thankful that it was of brief duration. A boy has no business to succeed like that.

I felt a certain vague uneasiness, even then, and it grew more definite when “Mo” Glenn got to discussing my predecessor, one day, and remarked, “When he first come, we wanted to eat him up, and before he cleared aout we wished we had.” Was I only a new broom, after all?

Nonsense! I was a spiritual potentate. But

unluckily, Thorpe was more than a truckload of spiritual potentates could cope with. I had reason to know it, before long, for I came slam up against its astonishing code of morals. Wilkins Glenn, at whose house I was making a pastoral call, reeled into the parlor silly drunk on hard cider, and asked me to offer prayer. "Anyshing you (hic) shink shuitable," said Wilkins, and the family went down on their knees.

There you had it — piety, real piety, along with a moral obtuseness that was the more difficult to reach because of its self-satisfied adherence to the Code. In Thorpe, it was a crime to drink beer, perfectly allowable to drink hard cider if you called it "sweet." In the same way, it was a crime to smoke, but allowable to raise tobacco and sell it. It was a crime to dance, but not for grown-ups to play kissing games. It was a crime to tell malicious yarns, but not to believe malicious yarns. It was a crime to steal, but not to roll up letters inside newspapers by way of saving postage. If you went to the city, it was a crime to visit the theater, although the amateur Thespians in Thorpe perpetrated a "drammer" in which the superintendent of the Sunday School hugged the teacher of the Infant Class amid squeals of delight from the "infants."

Do you wonder that I laughed, when I came to understand the Code, or that there was woe behind the laugh? Being a spiritual potentate in Thorpe was awfully like being a spiritual potentate among the Southern darkies, who are sincere

in their religiosity at prayer-meeting and equally sincere when they approach a chicken-roost on their way home. They, too, have a Code. They will steal your chickens with a clear conscience, your watch never.

Now, I don't mean to be too hard on Thorpe, nor was I then. If its religion, however genuine in and of itself, had a miserably imperfect relation to conduct, the trouble was with Thorpe's wits rather than with Thorpe's heart. And I saw ways to apologize for Thorpe's wits. In-breeding — "too much cousining," as the country folks put it — had made Thorpe "queer" not only in mind but in body. To go further back, the in-breeding came from "the lay of the land." Hills that pretty nearly killed the "hoss" separated Thorpe from villages close by. Few strangers ever visited Thorpe, few Thorpeans ever developed an acquaintance with outsiders. Mrs. "Deacon" Glenn told me that in her whole life she had never been beyond the horizon visible from her own doorstep. The consequence of such isolation was that when a Thorpean wanted a wife, he married a Thorpean, and, as Thorpeans were scarce — only three hundred and fifty, all told — it generally involved his marrying his cousin.

For a couple of centuries, more or less, the "cousining" had gone on, till Thorpe's genealogical tree resembled a banyan. Or no, that is rather too rough on the banyan. Idiots don't grow on banyans, and we had seven in Thorpe. Neither do "freaks" grow on banyans, and Thorpe had its

midget, and had once had its giant, while the number of deaf-mutes and people with hare-lips and cross-eyes was out of all proportion to the population. Assembled, such unfortunates would have made a grievous showing, though of course nobody cared to assemble them — especially the poor creatures Thorpe referred to as “them as ain’t over an’ above bright.” You could ramble through Thorpe a dozen times without realizing how serious a deterioration had afflicted the “stalwart native stock.” You might come away impressed only with the vigor and manliness of its boys and, if you had happened to see Martha Glenn or Agnes (pronounced Ag-knees), the rosy-cheeked beauty of its girls.

The mental effects of “cousining”—unless you chanced to fall in with “them as ain’t over an’ above bright”—would seem to you nothing alarming. You would find the Thorpeans a witty, communicative, genial tribe, and astonishingly civilized—at least, part of them—with good books on their shelves and good magazines on their living-room tables and perhaps even a newspaper of some merit arriving daily by mail from New York or Boston. Only on real acquaintance would you discover the defects underlying their specious and superficial brilliancy—the defects, that is, that made the Code and, worse than that, Thorpe’s measureless capacity for hate.

When I speak of hate, I don’t mean that Thorpe was a feud-ridden village. You hear a lot about

feud-ridden villages, in New England, just as you hear of abandoned farms, not to mention the abandoned farmers who swap old wives for new without divorce on the one hand or benefit of clergy on the other. You even hear of villages where, if you credit the report, there has not been a wedding for forty years. (Ah, the sweet, idyllic loveliness of a life close to nature!) And yet Thorpe was no such rustic vice-center. As the saying goes, it was "very much married." It stayed married. Nor had it—in my day, at least—a single abandoned farm, or anywhere a feud. So far as I observed, no family in Thorpe "had it in for" another family. Thorpe was on speaking terms, all around. Why—bless you!—how could Thorpe help it? We had no local newspaper, and the man who refused to chat with his neighbor on the way out of church would have been depriving himself of simply invaluable gossip.

But there was hate in Thorpe, nevertheless—a sore, aggrieved, pathetic hate, as painful as it was foolish. There was scarce a household but believed itself ostracized, scarce a household but was afflicted with the mania of persecution. When months—or even years—went by, and nobody dropped in for a friendly call, a family would conclude, "Gawsh! thar must be some story goin' around abaout us!" The joke of it was (if you could see the humor through the misery) this same family was abstaining all the while from dropping in for friendly calls on other families. Hence a

"vicious circle," as the doctors say — only, it was "vicious" in the popular sense as well as the scientific.

Ned Burroughs, at Byefield, once burst out with a terrific indictment of our classmate Stephens. "He claims to be a born orator," thundered Burroughs, "whereas, he is a born jackass and has done everything in his power to cultivate the gift." This was a trifle unjust, I fear, but I am perfectly fair when I say that Thorpe, doomed to isolation by "the lay of the land," was doing "everything in its power to cultivate the gift." It had no social life; consequently, no public spirit. It was not a community, it was a disease.

Dr. Edward Everett Hale used to say that the cause of rustic unsociability was mud — the lack of sidewalks and the extreme difficulty of getting from house to house. Well, perhaps. It seemed to me, however, that the real cause was "boiled shirts." When the old folks told me about the jolly times in Thorpe when they were young — how every farmhouse overflowed with "comp'ny" every evening in the week — I would ask what the "comp'ny" wore. Sure enough, their work-clothes. The idea of "boiled shirts" as essential to sociability had not so much as entered their heads, and when it did, pop went sociability. "Boiled shirts" were too much bother. When Samanthly said to Hiram, "Ain't it time we druv over to' see the Irys?" Hiram would answer, "Guess nawt." And Iry had the same dire reluctance when Mrs. Iry suggested

"driving over to see the Hiram." So, there you were — and there you stuck.

Naturally, it gave me the shivers, this discovery of Thorpe's loneliness, Thorpe's pain, Thorpe's hate, for it seemed a monstrous, immovable thing, too big to be budged by mere talk. And yet, seeing through it as I did, I resolved on trying what sermons would do. Actually, I began planning out a what-is-the-matter-with-Kansas kind of tirade, and should have risked it, I don't doubt, had not the Shropshire minister tramped into Thorpe one afternoon and unbosomed himself about dead cats in his well.

It appeared that his salary was raised by a series of raffles, and that, the Sunday before, he had read from his pulpit the laws of the State touching raffles. Consequence, cats.

He was quite wrought up about it — said he didn't expect to get the taste out of his mouth before Judgment Day — and entreated me "never, *never*, NEVER" to meddle with the customs and institutions of Thorpe. "Young man," he said, "the sooner you learn to face facts, the better for all concerned. Everybody with any spunk or ambition or relish for progress got out of these hill towns years and years ago. The stick-in-the-muds are left. They abhor change. They get mad as haters at the first hint of it. They are as shocked as if you were to suggest cleaning up the slums of Heaven. My advice is, preach the simple gospel on Sunday and tear around visiting on week days,

and let Thorpe jog along in its rut unmolested. Otherwise, beware of Pussy-cats!"

Rather a bump, this! For Shropshire was another Thorpe. What had befallen the Shropshire parson was a warning to me — or a challenge!

I took it as a challenge. While I saw that spouting progress from the pulpit was folly, the cat question was up for discussion, and I said to myself, "I'm not going to be stumped by cats. There's more than one way to skin 'em."

If you remember my tampering with social work — in London first and then in an American institutional church — you can guess the way I had in mind. I wanted a social settlement for Thorpe. I wanted a group of Robert Woodses and Jane Addamses who would come and live in our decadent village and regenerate it from top to bottom. I wanted them to introduce intensive farming and restore the old-time handicrafts and start new ones and make Thorpe thrive, so that, instead of every promising youngster's quitting the place as soon as he was big enough to know where he was, promising youngsters would stay put. I wanted telephones lobbied for, along with a trolley line across the hills and civilized district schools. I wanted the settlement to foster sociability. I wanted it to substitute friendliness for hate. Still better, I wanted it to wheedle Thorpe out of its devotion to the Code and teach it the meaning of broad, sane, institutional living.

It was a beautiful dream, I still think, and much less crazy than it may seem — nothing more fan-

tastic, really, than shifting to the rural glades the sort of thing that has so often worked wonders in cities. Other country parsons had had the dream before me. One in particular was all on fire with it, and when I wrote him my plans he nearly burst for joy. Yes, we would pitch in and try it. If we succeeded, our triumph would go banging down the corridors of fame. We should have immortalized ourselves.

Well, what came of it? I can sum up the results in one word — nothing!

Everybody said we had hit on the final and only logical solution of the rural problem. The more we poked about for encouragement from sociologists and clergymen and reformers — by letter, of course, for neither of us was free to travel — the more hilariously we got patted on the back. But when it came to anything like action, we were confronted with gracefully worded paraphrases of the maxim, "Let George do it!"

And eventually "George" did, though neither in my day nor in my way. Years later, the nationwide campaign for "rural uplift" set in — the Country Life Commission and all that — kidnapping and re-christening the ideas we set afloat, and, by giving them a new and more practical turn, making them "go." I am thankful to "George" for this. A woful thing it would have been for me if I had become a celebrity at that stage. I needed a thorough drubbing, just then, and — oh, didn't I get it?

Not alone through the collapse of my pet project,

either. What cut, infinitely worse than that, was perceiving that I should be unable to remain in Thorpe beyond the year I had engaged for, if indeed I were not forced to take to my heels before the year was out. Already I was "strapped," and scared for the future, and in debt to my own people.

I had expected to be poor on six hundred dollars. I had expected to suffer. I had expected to scrimp. I had expected a nervous half-hour, now and then, over the fancy price I was paying for board. But—in my guileless innocence—I had also expected the six hundred dollars.

If I felt inclined to pity myself for the fix I was in, I think I could make a clean job of it. There I was, breaking my back for my parishioners, in a profession whose every phase was new and trying and incredibly exhausting. I spent my Mondays in bed, too sick with fatigue to crawl out. And in the struggle I was alone—not one living creature there could offer me anything at all resembling the sort of companionship I had been used to. In a way, it was like living among foreigners. Besides, I was a failure, and knew it. The church throve, to be sure, and I could see that there were times when my people counted on me in affliction. On the whole, I was the minister they thought they wanted and, as I believe even now, a faithful minister according to conventional standards. According to my own standards, however, I was a perfect fizzle and the one way I saw of remedying the flunk had come to nothing. To be fleeced in addition was misery!

Oh, the relief if I could have cut loose and sworn a few thumping, round oaths at that parish! As it was, I lacked not only the talent but also the mood and the motive. I could not be angry with Thorpe, even when I had to wait eight weeks before I could raise the four dollars and fifty cents I had agreed to send my uncle in Denver by way of prepaying the express charges on a batch of theological books he promised to ship me. And it was entirely without rancor that I surveyed the holes in my boots and the tattered lining of my every-day coat. The Thorpeans had holes in their own boots, meanwhile, and were raggeder, if anything, than I; and, barring a mental twist and its moral by-products, they were dear, good people.

Don't call it meanness, their running me into debt. I was simply the victim of a widespread and very lamentable misconception as to the parson's pay. To be relentless and get out with a big stick for "the man higher up," I may say that I was the victim of a church-treasurer, whom I should like to wallop with the big stick, except for my conviction that the fault — in his case, also — was of the head rather than of the heart.

See how matters stood — money matters, that is. Two-thirds of my salary came from the Home Mission Board, promptly, in quarterly remittances, with a charmingly grateful letter of encouragement each time. The remaining third — a mere trifle of two hundred dollars, but important to me as representing the difference between debt and decency — was all our treasurer had to collect.

Then why on earth didn't he hustle around and collect it? The people were willing enough to pay. The dawdling was his entirely, though I must add that they "stood for" it.

One day, when my hostess had been nudging me for an over-due board-bill, I went to that treasurer and, as the diplomats say, "made representations." A funny time I had, luckily. If the old chap had borne less resemblance to a comic farmer in a play, I am afraid our interview would have been a regular, tip-top rumpus.

"Jeerusalum crickets!" he blurted. "Here I been, treasurer o' this here church nigh onto twenty year, an' I'm blessed if you ain't the fust to kick."

He was not indignant. Oh, no! He was shocked. My predecessors, he explained, were "spiritual men." They "wan't in the ministry for what thar was in it." Fellows of lofty ideals and disinterested motives, they could wait indefinitely for their pay and never go "fussin' around" if it gave them the slip altogether.

I backed away—pretty crestfallen, I admit, though richly furnished with food for thought; and, the more I turned it over in my mind, the more clearly I saw that my plight was the result of a perfectly anomalous business relation between pastor and people—in short, a muddle inherent in the nature of the case. To make the point comprehensible, let me compare my position with that of a hypothetical Geraldine McSweeny, imaginary

stenographer to the supposititious Paragon Pickle Co., Ltd.

"Twelve per" is her stipend, and she gets it. Right on the dot comes her little yellow envelope, not from an unpaid treasurer who already has his hands full managing his own affairs, but from a treasurer hired to look after Geraldine, among other "dee-tails," and in terror of a "call-down" from "the boss" if he shirks.

As for Geraldine, she has never set up for a miracle of disinterestedness, crying, "Woe is me if I stenog not these chicken-tracks!" She hates to "stenog." She hates pickles. Quite conceivably, she hates "the boss." Her sole aim in life is the "twelve per," and, once the little yellow envelope plays her false, the Paragon Pickle Co., Ltd., will know her no more. The very pickles in their casks understand this, and think it entirely right and proper, as of course it is.

Ah, how different from Geraldine's was that situation of mine in Thorpe. I wanted to preach — it was a joy and privilege and its own inestimable reward. My people knew it. They knew I was not serving them, primarily. I was serving my Lord and Saviour.

And yet for hire? No, not for hire. A minister's salary doesn't pay him for preaching, it enables him to preach; if I had been exacting pay for the amount of soul-draining, man-killing work I did in Thorpe, I should have set the figure at four thousand dollars, that being the sum it would

have been worth in any other calling. Meanwhile, however, I had to exist, somehow, and in such a how as to be able to preach. And, in order to preach, I had to maintain my self-respect. Was this possible when, from my pulpit on Sunday, I looked down into faces that seemed to say only too frankly, "Pretty talk — for a fellow in debt to his own parishioners!"

This was my side of it, and I think I comprehend Thorpe's side. Far from considering me its hired man, Thorpe considered me its guest; and if the hospitality it showed was a bit skimpy — well, what did a minister expect? My comic farmer was right. He had been "treasurer o' that thar church nigh onto twenty year, an'—Jeerusalum crickets! — I was the fust to kick."

There was something exhilarating in having smashed an age-long tradition. It gave me the thrill a small urchin feels when he throws a "rock" through a plate-glass window ten feet square. Moreover, I relished jeering the weird absurdity of my fix. I had been in funny scrapes before — plenty of them, in my college days — but this broke the record, not only for absurdity but for size. Perfect of its kind, it had even a certain beauty, as the ugliest masterpiece has. So, instead of moping, I was filled with mirth and awe by turns, especially when my good parishioners kept saying, in entire seriousness, "It's a thaousand shames you ain't married!"

Great head! Two ministers for one pittance — and that not paid!

IV

GERTRUDE

FOR months at a stretch, my parishioners had been at me about matrimony. They "wanted the parsonage opened." They wanted the feminine touch that would add its grace to my undeniably awkward and tactless ministrations as I went from house to house. They especially wanted me accounted for as "the husband of one wife." Single, I was looked upon as a dangerous man, with no end of giddy potentialities up my sacred sleeve.

For my own part, the loneliness of my existence had played the mischief with my "principles"—by which I mean those of the He Gimel Wau, the monastic order we had founded in fun at Byefield "for the extirpation of matrimonial engagements among theological students throughout the world and the gradual divorce of those already married."

According to its "Shorter Catechism"—a scroll thirteen feet long twirled up on a duly exorcised rolling-pin—early marriage ruined a minister. He would not only be "giving hostages to fortune," he would be imperiling his integrity. A family would involve unpaid debts. It would involve cowardice. He would be afraid to preach unwelcome truth, afraid to deal boldly with evil, afraid

62 CONFESSIONS OF A CLERGYMAN

to risk Hail Columbia. He would have doubts as to who owned the most centrally located of his features. You can expect a man to be self-sacrificing, in his devotion to his ideals, yet isn't it rather rough to insist on his being wife-of-his-bosom-sacrificing, or half-grown-brat-sacrificing, or even babe-in-arms-sacrificing?

"Oh, decidedly!" thought the He Gimel Wau, with some semblance of logic, I still believed — and do now, partly. I can point to a minister who has got on quite tolerably without a wife. I refer, of course, to his holiness, the Pope.

But it became more and more evident that I and the Pope moved in different spheres. For one thing, my parishioners had a way of calling my attention to this pleasing damsel and that, and telling me how "suitable" they were. For another, I was beset by "parson-chasers"—girls who had probably no intention of nabbing me, yet who lacked the ingenuity to let me alone. They borrowed my manuscripts. They waylaid me with theological posers. They had all sorts of queer things the matter with their spiritual insides and must "see their pastor."

I understood them perfectly. Isolation, along with the wholly womanly desire for a man to talk to, had led them to pursue me, not because I was the most bewitching young bachelor in the "taown o' Thorpe," but because I was the most accessible. Others might dodge. I couldn't. And, unavoidably, my relations with them verged a lot too close upon the hither shore of sentiment.

Now, the most feasible way out of my predicament was clear enough to me. Mormonism! If I had been free to marry the entire batch, "parson-chasers" included, all would have been as blithe as a whole belfry of wedding-chimes. But I knew what would happen if, forsaking the others, I should cleave to one only — no matter how "suitable."

I came to hate the word "suitable." The oftener I heard it, the more I detested it. What did it mean, really, unless a "marriage of convenience," with starvation for a dowry? I balked. I was thrown back perforce upon the doctrines (or should I say the heresies?) of He Gimel Wau.

And yet, as I say, I was lonely and in need of comprehending sympathy, and you will forgive me if I add that I was human and at the stage when it is Springtime all the year 'round, with everything Springtime implies. Perhaps it will not be over-working your tolerance if I go on, after this rather dismal account of my embarrassment, and tell what ended it.

On the first of March came my quarterly remittance from the Home Mission Board. Real money again! Riches! In the joy of it, I resolved to make for the city and attend Annual Conference. So I put on my ministerial high hat and Prince Albert (the only decent rig I had left) and tramped over to West Thorpe, where I barely caught the train — in fact, got on by the rear platform of the very last car — one of those combination concerns, half baggage-car, half smoker.

Pushing open the door, I let myself into a hurly-burly of shouting train-hands, who were readjusting baggage, shifting crates filled with cackling poultry, and admonishing a yapping, yowling collie dog chained up in one corner. And in the midst of the pandemonium was a cot, and on the cot a pale, dark-eyed girl, covered to her chin with cinder-strewn blankets, while beside her stood a dowdy little old gentleman with country quack written all over him. I think I should have been a good deal less touched if I had not seen her hand—a delicate, sensitive, exquisitely molded hand, very white, like her face, and twitching with pain.

Think of it! Going to the city; for an operation, like as not; to her death, maybe; alone, except for a country doctor; and in such a style as that!

I have no excuse to make for what I did when the train pulled in at the big Terminal Station. I leaped to the platform, sprinted to the flower-stand in the waiting-room, and came panting back with a huge armful of pink roses.

A couple of white-coated fellows with a stretcher were already at the baggage-car door, fairly screaming directions at the doctor, so as to be heard above the din of the station. It was no moment to interrupt—or wasn't it just the moment? I handed the roses up to the doctor, shouting, "Give these to your patient!" and fled.

"There!" I said to myself. "She'll know somebody sympathizes, and it's done *me* good, anyhow."

Next minute, I thought, "You fool! This was

crazy of you; you couldn't afford it, and what if you could? You can't tell what sort of person she was. You won't even know whether she's alive or dead. And a pretty yarn it will make if Thorpe gets hold of it!"

I solaced my anxieties on that score by reflecting that the girl had no means of tracing me. Whoever or whatever she might be — good, bad, or indifferent — I was safe enough, and Thorpe would never know. With the instinct one has, after a break like that, I tried to put it out of my mind, and I tell of it now because it helps condone the hurried nature of what followed.

Three weeks later came a letter — from her!

Barton Glenn, our postmaster at Thorpe, grinned knowingly through his little window as he poked it under the grating at me. No doubt he had noted the feminine hand-writing on the envelope and also the postmark. She had written from Elgin Centre, a tumble-down, gone-to-seed village like ours and only six miles away.

It was a charming letter, thanking me for the flowers and saying they had done her worlds of good, and explaining that she knew who I was because her doctor had remembered my getting on the train at Thorpe and spotted me for the minister — by my high hat and frock coat, I inferred. She hoped I would come and see her if I was ever in Elgin, for "evidently I was a very nice minister," and signed herself, "Your grateful patient, Gertrude Venner, Schoolma'am."

Well, well!

In no time, the story was all over Thorpe that I was sweet on an Elgin girl, so I quoted to myself the local proverb, "May as well die fer a sheep as a lamb," and set out on my wheel, openly, in broad daylight, and along the road which, crossing Beech Hill, led unequivocally to Elgin.

Thorpe rose to the occasion superbly. Thorpe smiled, it is true, but only with approbation. Parson-chasers, "suitable" girls, and the well-meaning, motherly dames who had been boosting me toward wedded bliss — yes, and the men, too — united in a wordless, though perfectly lucid, indorsement of their minister's adventure. "Go it, parson!" they seemed to cry. "Here's luck to you!"

At this point, I suppose you are saying, "Now for the story of the minister's wooing," and I hate awfully to disappoint you. It is a story I can't tell. Nobody ever did tell the story of his own courtship. Some have tried to — shame on them! — but it stuck in their throats or halted on the very tips of the pens, and the result was a hypocritical travesty that did them small credit.

Nevertheless, there are things I can say, and, within limits, I mean to be outspoken — about Gertrude, first, and the splendid girl she was. Three years before, she and a crowd of her college classmates had spent a summer tenting on the shore of a pond near Elgin Centre, and she had got interested in the inquisitive little barbarians who visited the camp to fetch supplies or on their way "fishin'" or when out after huckleberries. It had seemed to her that a lot could be done for them, and

that was why she had settled in Elgin as a school-ma'am.

As for her trip to the city — well, you know how a country quack can pretty nearly kill you saving your life when there is no need. Painful though the illness was, Gertrude might have been spared that culminating ordeal if the quack had known his business. She was recovering now. The roses were back in her cheeks, and — is it any wonder, considering? — there were other roses in her memory.

Altogether, she was a girl after my own heart, attempting in Elgin Centre the very thing I was attempting in Thorpe — coming at it from a different angle, to be sure, though with the same identical purpose. So I was not entirely in fun when I said, laughingly, "Miss Venner, a sudden thought strikes me. Let us swear eternal friendship." And if we got on at a surprising rate, it was partly because the flowers in the railway station had strewn themselves along our path to swift acquaintance and partly because we were so isolated, both of us, and so in need of a really understanding sympathy. Haven't you heard missionaries tell of times when they cried in their hearts, "Anything — anything! — for one glimpse of a white face!" No offense to the worthies of Thorpe and Elgin, but it was somewhat that way with us.

Then, too, there was the happy influence of gossip. In less than a week, Thorpe had me engaged to Gertrude, and Elgin had Gertrude engaged to me, and, so far as public sentiment went, we could

see that we "might as well die for a sheep as a lamb." The marvel to me is not that we had a full-fledged love-affair on our hands within a month or thereabouts, the marvel is that we kept our heads as long as we did — for which I am sorry.

I owe everything to Gertrude. It irks me to recall our swearing "eternal friendship" and laughing when we did it. Friendship! I wish there had never been a moment of friendship between us, and that it had been love at first sight on both sides.

Now, when I say I owe everything to Gertrude, I come out on ground where I have no scruples against candor. I can speak freely — for instance, about her advising me to take the bull by the horns, in Thorpe, and risk Hail Columbia.

One day I happened to remark, "I'm hard up for a text for my next sermon. Don't you think you could suggest one?"

"Oh, a dandy!" said Gertrude, with a flash of mischief that tickled me enormously. "Preach from the text, 'He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow.'"

I said there wasn't any such text, and she was fooling.

"Yes, there is!" she insisted. "In Proverbs. Look it up, and find out what it means, and preach from it, if you've got the nerve, and I'll come over and hear you."

When she spoke of coming over, I was positive she must be joking. What would the gossips say? But I looked up the text in my Concordance, that

evening, and then pulled down a Commentary on Proverbs and read: "*Winking with the eye*: Metaphorical, meaning, to smooth things over; to condone evil; to act on the principle, 'Least said, soonest mended.'"

A "dandy text" indeed! Thorpe was "winking with the eye." Thorpe was "smoothing things over." Thorpe was "condoning evil." Thorpe was "acting on the principle, 'Least said, soonest mended.'"

And it was "causing sorrow." Open feuds would have been infinitely better than the show of friendliness the Thorpeans kept up, with hate in their hearts all the while. Prosecution for slander would have been better than their glum, hurt, timid reticence when a family concluded that the neighbors refrained from calling because, "by gum, thar's some story goin' araound abaout us!"

Although visions of Shropshury cats in the minister's well came before my eyes, I preached from that text the following Sunday, and Gertrude was there, in a pew near the door, and there was a regular epidemic of insomnia right in sermon-time. A flutter of amused astonishment greeted my text, but, while the amusement died down soon enough, the astonishment kept increasing as I went on and told Thorpe what the Scriptures meant by "winking with the eye" and how Thorpe was disobeying the Scripture, and the mess Thorpe was in in consequence.

Courage? Oh! didn't it take courage? I was as scared as a Pullman porter who has been unsuccessfully lynched a half-dozen times and sees it coming

on again. Remembering the Shropshire minister's experience, I could actually taste cats.

To make matters worse, I had no manuscript. Those journeys to Elgin had prevented. And it was awful, looking down into the sullen, horrified faces before me, and knowing that a single mis-chosen word might do harm instead of good, and that, confronted as I was by determined opposition, I might lose my temper and betray a spirit unworthy of a minister.

Thanks to Gertrude's presence, I pulled through without flinching. I was very gentle. I touched sore points as kindly as I knew how. I gave Thorpe the benefit of the doubt whenever possible. I avoided the censorious tone. I was in the mood of a doctor dealing with a refractory patient and careful not to arouse needless animosity. But I got everything said—everything. I talked about senseless hate and about remediable isolation and about Thorpe's shallow, artificial, unreasoning code of morals. I showed how, all along the line, Thorpe was "winking with the eye" and, as an inevitable result, "causing sorrow." And, with all the tenderness of my soul, I plead with Thorpe to quit it.

You can guess what came of that sermon, though probably you can't guess the form my retribution took.

The closing hymn was sung—perfunctorily—by the choir, no one joining in, and when I stepped down from the pulpit after pronouncing the bene-

diction, no one came forward to shake hands with me. My people filed out, coldly and without the usual hum of gossip. Only Gertrude remained, and I saw that her eyes were full of tears.

I went to her and said, "Why, Gertrude! Don't take it like that! Don't! It's all right. Years from now, they'll understand. And it can't hurt me, anyhow. I'm going to resign."

"It's all my fault," she said, drying her eyes, "but Jim, you were perfectly splendid!"

At that I laughed, and we walked out together, and I helped her into her "team," and then went over to Dudley Glenn's and invited him, in his capacity as chairman of our Church Committee, to consider my resignation.

"Yep, an' durned glad to git it," was the answer I expected. The answer I got, however, was no such dig. Mr. Glenn heard me through with remarkable composure, in view of my crime and its enormity, and then drawled, "Naow you jest look a-here, young man! Ain't you done mischief enough for one day withaout this? Set daown, an' be ca'm, an' I'll tell you what."

I sat down, mighty inquisitive to know the tack he intended taking.

"Naow you jest look a-here," he began over again, in a more conciliatory tone and dropping the "young man"—for which mercy I was grateful. "I s'pose you meant well, but you'll know more when you're married." I felt a redness come out, way up to the roots of my hair, and he noticed it,

I think, for a faint, involuntary twinkle behind his spectacles got the better of him, and he was almost amiable as he indulged in a third fresh start.

"Naow you jest look a-here. If you git aout in a huff, it'll be talked abaout in seven caounties, an' haow're we goin' to git another minister? Be ca'm. Stick by us, an' we'll stick by you till your year's aout, an' then we'll part friends."

I could have cheered. I told Mr. Glenn I would do as he asked, if the Committee agreed, and by night it was settled. I was to stay, on condition that I refrained from "cuttin' up didoes," and my people would behave as if nothing had happened.

But alas, it was only another case of "winking with the eye," and — that the Scripture might be fulfilled — it "caused sorrow."

Thorpe had bound itself by a promise it was unable to live up to, strive how it would. It managed to crowd the church on Sunday morning, just as before the smash, but my evening congregation dwindled to a mere ghost of its former self, and the mid-service had to be abandoned because of empty seats, and it was borne in upon me that the way to escape severe ague, not to say chill-blains, was to abstain from calling. When I passed along the road, afoot or on my wheel, the farmers lifted their hats (a courtesy they extended to ministers, though never to women) yet with not one hint remaining of the old, cheery, smiling cordiality. As for my treasurer, he ignored my needs completely.

Of course, there was the tingle of exhilaration over being "persecuted," and of course there was

Gertrude, and of course I realized that the term of my martyrdom had limits. If I were to set about making a hero of myself by reason of the scrape I had got into, I should certainly have my hands full.

However, I was anything but happy. I knew it had been an outrageous blunder, trying to bring Thorpe to its senses in a single sermon. It would have taken years. Besides, I was head and heels in love, and saw no prospect of being able to marry. Then, too, I faced the chance of becoming at no distant date that most uncomfortable of embarrassed mortals, a clergyman without a charge.

I had damaged my reputation. It would be a long, long time, I thought, before I should find a church stupid enough to trust me. And I was poor — a lot too poor to pull through a period of unemployment. Indeed, it looked as if, when the year was up, I should be hard put to it to make a dignified exit from my parish. I pictured myself as trudging to West Thorpe, and — from there on — walking the ties, in tall hat and Prince Albert, like the well-known actor in the funny papers.

But Gertrude stood by me nobly, and I can't begin to tell the comfort that was. "This will be the making of you," she said — with more wisdom than I realized at the time. And there was another thing I failed to realize. For Gertrude was soon to stand by me through a crisis of real seriousness — namely, the "burning" of Edward B. Archer, "heretic."

V

THE BURNING OF EDWARD B. ARCHER

IT would be "evidences of Christianity," doubtless, if we saw in other people's happiness a cure for our own unhappiness; but would it not also demonstrate that we were too good to live? No such risk in my case! I was not in the least consoled when I found a rather large, rather stiff, and decidedly expensive-looking envelope awaiting me at the post-office a few mornings after my celebrated discourse from the text, "He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow."

"Oh, hang!" I muttered, inwardly. "Somebody's going to be married."

It cut to the quick, less because I wondered where the money was to come from for a wedding present than because it seemed a fling at my own slim chance of matrimony.

But no, it was not a wedding invitation after all. The handsomely engraved card inside bade me attend the ordination of my old Byefield classmate, Edward B. Archer, pastor-elect of the large and influential Arlington Avenue Church in Durham.

A pang of absolutely un-Christian jealousy shot through me. Here was I, a penniless and soon-to-be-jobless country parson — ostracized, practically, for speaking plain truths from a decent motive —

and yonder was Ned, just back from Germany and launching out upon a brilliant career, with a fine church, a splendid salary, and every prospect of fame and power and unlimited usefulness.

But what was this? At the bottom of the card I read, "The honor of your services as a member of the Ordaining Council is earnestly requested."

In an instant, my jealousy went up in thin air. How generous of Ned to remember me! Evidently, he was the same kind, considerate, magnificent fellow I had known at Byefield. Success had not changed him in the least. I would go. Of course I would go. It could be easily managed, as Durham was only fourteen miles from Thorpe.

We had been fond of Ned, all of us. He was the big, broad-shouldered, ruddy type, with frank blue eyes and a buoyant heartiness that acted upon us like a tonic. Even the Byefield villagers got attached to him. He had money — not much, I supposed, and yet more than enough to mark him as a nabob among the "mendicant friars"—and he had had "social training." The very first week, word went around that there was "a gentleman at the Seminary." As for the groundlings, there in the village, they adored him. The skinny little wench who fetched our "laundry" said he was "a dear," and no wonder! He had walked home with her one afternoon, and looked into the family finances, and advanced thirty-five dollars, "payable at death."

That was typical. All sorts of stories came out about Ned—for instance, his sitting up three nights in succession with the poor chap who used

to bring us fire-wood and all but perished of pneumonia.

And in the class-room, Ned shone. It took us barely a month to see that Destiny had her eye on him for the Fellowship. Nobody else had a show, with Ned there. He won it, hands down. Graduating a year before I did, he was sent at the Seminary's expense to Germany, where he studied at Heidelberg for a time and then at the University of Berlin.

You will call it sour grapes, perhaps, and yet I can't help stopping to ask why Byefield sent its star graduates to Germany. Wasn't Byefield already drenched to the saturation-point with the spirit of "the best German critics"? And what good was Germany, anyhow — that is, as a place to prepare for the ministry?

I could have understood our Fellows' going to France. They make wonderful *pasteurs* over there — men of eloquence and force and apostolic insight and the consecrated genius that wins souls. And I could have understood the choice of Edinburgh, say, or Oxford. The Scottish and English universities have an atmosphere at once devout and scholarly. As the Catholics put it, they "form the priest." Think of spiritual giants like John Watson and Canon Farrar and then see if you can find their like in Germany.

Oh, of course, the Germans are religious! The war has proved it. We are in no danger of forgetting the Kaiser's allegiance to his "good old German God" (and Allah) or the martyrdom of

peasants and workmen who took stock in it. Among the lower classes, German mysticism thrives. But what is it you hear when you question American clergymen who have taken post-graduate courses in Germany?

That the universities are candidly agnostic.

That sensuality—"unmoral rather than immoral," to quote the easy bromidiom—pervades them.

That German scholarship tends to de-spiritualize.

And that German preaching is hopelessly dry and boresome.

All in all, then, I am completely treed when I attempt to give any presentable excuse for sending theological graduates to Germany for "advanced" studies, and I believe I have my feet on the solid ground when I say that, rather than send them to Heidelberg or Berlin, I should send them to the Bowery or to Bloody Gulch or off campaigning with the brave, trusting, simple-hearted Crusaders. As a rule, the thing a boy needed after Byefield was not more Byefield (and worse) but a chance to get Byefield out of his system for good and all.

A witty Englishman once referred to Napoleon III as "that great unrecognized incapacity," and there are times when the gibe seems eminently suited to Byefield, though at other times I appreciate that the Seminary and its German annex accomplished exactly what they set out to. Byefield had no ambition to "form the priest." Its aim was to form the theological high-brow. If he became a walking encyclopedia of "truth"—excel-

lent. If he became a "thinker"—glorious. If he became a professor of Aramaic or of Hittite archaeology—perfect!

Hence Germany. Nowhere else was he so sure to espouse the ideals (save the mark!) of what I am constrained to characterize as "the basest form of scholarship."

Had this happened to Ned? I hoped not—in fact, I believed not, for I had thought him proof against that—and there was evidence more or less conclusive in his having been called to the Arlington Avenue Church in Durham, where he was to succeed the venerable Dr. Charles Prescott Daniels, one of God's own prophets. Surely people who had "sat under" that saintly clergyman for thirteen years must know inspired preaching when they heard it. If they wanted Ned, what room was there for doubt as to the promise he gave of being worthy of their fondest expectations?

In the direction of Durham, the "taown o' Thorpe" had only two trains a day—one ridiculously early, the other arriving so as to give me barely time to reach the church by four o'clock, the hour set for the beginning of the ordination formalities. Like a fool, I took the afternoon train, and waited nearly half an hour on a siding at Brentville while the belated through express was coming up. Too bad! The function was well under way before I got there. Ned had read his statement of belief and was standing up against a fusillade of questions by the Council.

Perhaps you think of the scene as a secret, cham-

bered affair — Ned and his judges having it out in the church parlors all by themselves. No such thing. It took place in the body of the church, and something like eight hundred people were there — Ned's future parishioners, friends of his from as far away as Boston, outsiders drawn by curiosity, a score of reporters, and the members of the unusually large Council. I had difficulty in finding a seat.

Scarcely had I done so when I was aware of something gone amiss. The air tingled with excitement, and not of an agreeable sort, either. People leaned forward in their pews with an air of tense and, as it seemed to me, almost tragical anxiety. They were not in a devotional mood, nor even in a deliberative mood. I could think of but one word that fitted what was up. War!

Somehow or other, Ned had arrayed at least forty determined enemies against him. I knew it by the questions they asked. Every one of them was aimed at his undoing, and in a spirit of bitter animosity, with only very unsuccessful efforts to disguise it.

I remembered a talk I had once had with Dr. John Watson, then famous the world over as "Ian Mac-laren," about trials for heresy. "In Scotland," he had said, with his never-failing humor, "heresy-hunting is the national sport, and rather a genial one. Nobody really dislikes the heretic. He is as necessary to the day's fun as a fox is to a fox-hunt. On the whole, people feel a kind of indebtedness to him for being a heretic — that is, if he is game, and gives them a good run."

By the atmosphere pervading this conclave of ours, I judged that it was "a long, long way" to bonnie Scotland. Ned was game — much too game, in fact — but it was clear that he had got himself disliked.

How had he managed it? By neglecting to display "the caution of his convictions"? By letting out "truth"? By forgetting to mask new-fangled speculations in the nomenclature of the old orthodoxy? By refusing to "wink with the eye"?

I wondered, my heart in my mouth, and listened and watched to find out.

What I saw was more revelatory than what I heard. I could scarcely believe my eyes. There stood Ned, yonder in front of the pulpit, a living compendium of cockiness. It was in his posture, and the set of his shoulders, and the way he held his head. It was in his manner and the expression of his face. A little more, and he would have passed for downright arrogant.

I said to myself, "Heavens and earth! This isn't Ned Archer, it's Germany."

I recalled a Germanized higher-critic who had tinted a three-word verse in the "Rainbow Bible" three separate colors, conceitedly assuming to know that each of the three words came from a different source. Imagine that fellow hunted and at bay, and you have some vague, remote conception of the Ned Archer my astonished eyes beheld.

Presently, however, I began to doubt if even Germany could have changed him so. I thought, "He isn't changed, really. He's rattled — scared in the

presence of this huge congregation — bewildered by the Council's unexpected attitude — convinced he's done for, anyhow — and trying to 'brass it through.' " I pitied him from the bottom of my heart.

At the same time, I believed I could see what ailed the Council, for this was how things went:

An elderly, one-horse theologian, trained in the schools of the late 'Sixties (and slovenly enough they were!) would take a shot at Ned, and get an eye-opener when, lo! it "never touched him." Quick as a flash, Ned would return an answer that made the one-horse theologian feel silly, first, and then sour, and after that vindictive. The young man was too sharp for him. Ned had facts on his side, and, if you understand the *odium theologicum*, you can guess the effect. His tormentor shut up, but "had it in" for Ned worse than ever.

Then the candidate for "holy orders" would turn to the congregation, and elaborate the point, not only in straight talk but with an astonishing brilliancy at once poetic and convincing. He was by far the best speaker there, and, despite his fighting mood, you detected a rare devoutness in him, and a fine, clear-sighted spirituality — the real Ned we had known and loved at Byefield.

No sooner had he finished than another embattled septuagenarian went at him, to "catch it," like the rest.

It was wrong — oh, distressingly wrong! Ned was misrepresenting himself outrageously in his treatment of his elders, who were no match for him

intellectually and yet veterans in the service of Christ and crowned with unnumbered good works and deserving of delicate, not to say reverent, consideration. I wanted to cry out, "Be yourself, Ned! Climb down quick, and apologize, and tell them you lost your head and are sorry."

But I felt that his enemies were fully as much in the wrong as Ned Archer was. I seemed to hear them mutter, "Smart young chap, isn't he? Hmph! Pop goes his future!"

It had been expected that the public deliberations would last about an hour and a half, after which the Council would withdraw for a star-chamber session in the vestry. Then, following the Council's report, there was to be a supper in the Parish House, and a reception to the pastor-elect, and finally, at eight o'clock, the ordination service would begin.

It was close on six, however, when the Council repaired to the vestry for the strangest procedure I had witnessed in all my days and surpassing anything I have ever witnessed since.

Things looked bright enough at the outset. By the luck that can always attend the alphabetical arrangement of names, Ned's personal friends were the first to speak and give their votes, and they included several Byefield men who had known him intimately; of course, they voted for the candidate's ordination. In what they said, they were content to enlarge upon the impression he had made in Byefield — his abilities as a student, his blameless

character, his charities, his devoutness, and his genius for what one of them called "applied Christianity in the concrete." As for myself, I was too excited to do more than give my vote for Ned, and let it go at that.

Now, I suppose that our coming along more or less bunched toward the beginning of the alphabet, accidental though it was, put it into his enemies' heads that Archer had attempted to "pack" the Council, for there developed a rancor way beyond anything the debates up-stairs could account for. Man after man got up and pitched into Ned's statement of belief without mercy. They said he had shown "a beautiful, Christlike spirit" (rubbish!) but that they could not bring themselves to countenance his eschatology.

You know what eschatology is? Literally translated, it means "the doctrine of last things"—in other words the branch of theology treating of Heaven and Hell.

Ned had flunked. There was no denying it. Nothing he had said went to prove that he believed in lakes of molten fire, or that the wicked were doomed to sizzle forever and ever, world without end, amen! On the contrary, we had gathered that he thought some of them might lose their very existence, after retribution enough to offset the sins they had committed in the flesh, or that possibly the purpose of Hell was to burn the evil out of them (when I say "burn" I don't mean to imply his belief in literal fire), or that perhaps the Saviour's grace

might some day reach them, so that they could accept Christ and be born again, even in the depths of Sheol, and be restored to the Father's love.

You see how matters stood. Anybody determined to "get" Ned, had a choice of three heresies to work with — Annihilation, Restoration, and Future Probation.

For the life of me, I could not see that it would have mattered greatly if Ned had been guilty on all three charges at once. Years and years had passed since the well-known deacon remarked, "The Universalists say that everybody will be saved, but we hope for better things," and you could always raise a laugh by telling of the parson who declared, "If I didn't believe in fire and brimstone, I'd steal." In our denomination, Hell was a dead issue, no longer preached. Even our ministers, while profoundly convinced that conduct in this world affected our fate in the next, refused to dogmatize. Pardon the seeming frivolity of the quotation, but it appeared to them that to particularize with any sort of clean-cut definiteness regarding future punishment was to tackle "one of those things no fellow can find out." Such being their attitude toward an unfathomable problem, they had been lenient at ordinations and let in an Annihilationist here, a Restorationist there, and even an occasional Future Probationist — generally observing, "When he's older, he won't think he knows so much."

Imagine my amazement when Ned's enemies in the Council whipped out their pocket Testaments, turned to the most harrowing Hell-fire texts, plead

for their literal acceptance, and defended Eternal Damnation with all the long-winded ardor of their souls.

If they had said, "Brethren, a jackass has been wished on this church, and our mission is to chuck him," I could have appreciated that. It would have been plain, blunt, brutal sincerity. To his foes, poor Ned appeared "a born jackass who had done everything in his power to cultivate the gift."

But when they called him a dear, sweet Christian brother, and praised "the beautiful Christlike spirit" he had shown, and then sought his ruin by belauding Eternal Damnation, I felt like holding my nose.

In the midst of the pow-wow, we heard excited footsteps on the stairs — somebody in haste — and the door burst open, and — could it be possible? — there was Ned, striding half-way up the aisle, eyes blazing, cheeks ashy white, hair a tangled, damp mop over his forehead.

The Council was in confusion, and I believe at least half the members believed the victim was going to beg for mercy — which was a further proof that they didn't know Ned.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I hate to interrupt. Pardon the step, for I simply can't help it. Thinking over my statement and the things I said afterward, I have been unable to recall making myself clear as regards eschatology. In my own mind, the matter is entirely plain. I am a Restorationist."

As the old humorist, almost classic now, might have observed, had he been among those present, "It

would have been money in Edward B. Archer's pocket if he had never been born."

Things moved quickly after Ned's exit, and no wonder! He had convicted himself. Besides, it was late — a quarter past seven! And starvation is no cure for the *odium theologicum*. Quite the opposite!

When the last speaker had said his say, the moderator leaned over the reading desk, with grim bigotry (or its counterfeit) in his eye. "Brethren," he said, "we come now to the final balloting. It is a fateful crisis for the denomination. You who have countenanced this man, think again. What will the Universalists say? Brethren, you *da-a-a-aren't do it!*"

The ballots were cast. For ordination 27. Against ordination, 82.

I boiled — not with rage, merely. Worse was the red, stinging heat of shame.

The Council filed up the stairs and into the church, which was brightly lighted now, but more than half empty. The outsiders had gone home, tired and hungry and regretting they had come. Ned's "future parishioners" were sitting or standing in pews or aisles, and I caught a glimpse of Ned, over toward the right. The buzz of conversation (pretty anxious it must have been!) died down as we made our entrance.

The moderator proceeded to the pulpit. With remarkable composure, he said in a voice as carrying as it was soulless, "Because of the candidate's

doctrinal unsoundness, the Council refuses ordination."

Nothing at all sensational followed — unless you call it sensational for a church supper to be in readiness, with sweet young things in dainty aprons waiting to serve it, and waiting in vain. Nobody went near that supper. Nobody wanted to.

But neither did any one want to go home — except, naturally, the Council. They slunk away, four-fifths of them, just as I should have done, myself, had not an astonished girl I never set eyes on before said to me, "I beg pardon — but — but — won't you tell us about it?" An older woman was with her — the girl's mother, I surmised. "Yes, do! What went wrong?" she said.

I saw that several other members of the Council had been cornered, like myself. Groups formed round them. People no longer spoke in hushed, apologetic tones. There was something almost shrill about it, with a gruff rumble underneath.

I tried to answer the ladies who had accosted me, but my voice stuck in my throat, for I had seen a lot of people hurry toward Ned, and looked again, and he was not there.

Just then, a mellow but much flustered middle-aged gentleman came up to us. "I'm *Mr. Knight*," he said, plainly inferring that his wife and daughter had introduced themselves, "and if you three aren't as hungry as Polar bears, *I am*. Say we go home and raid the ice-chest. That includes you, *Mr. —*"

I gave him my name, and we went away together. Others were leaving, too. I glanced back, after we had gone a block or so, and saw that the sexton was putting out the lights in what might have been Ned's church.

There was no train Thorpe-wards till ten-thirty, so I spent the whole evening with the Knights, and how we did talk — about the Council, of course, and about Ned, and then about Byefield, and before I realized what I was being bamboozled into, about my experience with the Thorpeans.

Please remember, this was the first chance I had had of letting myself out, except to Gertrude, and don't be shocked if I admit talking the Knights pretty nearly deaf, dumb and blind. It was their own fault — they pumped me.

Especially Mr. Knight. He plied me with questions, burrowing this way and that, and simply going through me with an unwearying X-ray. I almost suspected he had an object, though what object, I failed to guess. I fell back on the conclusion that he was amusing himself, and I am sure the ladies were. How my accounts of Thorpe amazed them — for instance, my report of having expressed surprise at meeting with oyster-stew for Sunday morning breakfast and of the Thorpeans' assurance that the custom was universal throughout the earth.

Toward the end of the evening, Mr. Knight said abruptly, "Why don't you go West?"

"Would — if I got the chance," said I, and there was something significant, I imagined for half a

second, in the alacrity with which he changed the subject.

It did me worlds of good, letting myself out about Thorpe. For an hour, at least, it had kept my mind off the affair I have referred to ever since as "the burning of Edward B. Archer." But when Mr. Knight shook hands with me at the station and I boarded my train for West Thorpe, fury burst out in me afresh. "Bigots! Humbugs!" I caught myself muttering. "Scalawags! A nice profession I've bungled into! I'll get out of it—see if I don't!—and bang the door behind me!"

It was past midnight when I began pulling off my clothes in my fancy-priced room in the farmhouse at Thorpe, and I remember hearing the hundred-year-old clock in the hall strike one, and two, and three—and, a moment later, it seemed—five. As that was my host's getting-up time, in order to "turn to" and "take holt" and milk "them caows," I knew I could waylay him and demand something to eat.

By six, I was off for Elgin—afoot because of a punctured bicycle tire—and arrived just as Gertrude was finishing her breakfast. In the talk we had, between then and school-time, Gertrude came out strong.

She was lovely about it all. No one could have been kinder or more sympathetic, and certainly no one could have been more sweetly firm. She laughed me out of my belligerency. If a clique of testy old codgers had got on their ear, what of it?

Surely I wasn't goose enough to imagine Councils were all like that. I knew better. Besides, couldn't I forgive human nature in its dotage when a cocky young upstart had been rubbing its fur the wrong way? Leave the ministry on that account? Nonsense! She knew me too well for that!

This was like the sun coming out, and when the school-bell began ding-donging, I started back home a good deal cheered up, though more than half dead with fatigue and loss of sleep.

Somehow reaching the top of Beech Hill, I lay down flat on my back in the lee of a stone wall, and closed my eyes. A great mistake, this! Fifty embattled old gentlemen came and charged me with "doctrinal unsoundness," and loaded me into a tumbril, and bumped me along through a hooting, jeering, medieval town, and tied me to a stake, and — yes, they were lighting the fagots, and I could feel the heat, and the flames licking my cheek. I woke with a yell, and then — burst out in a huge, resounding, boyish laugh.

It was mid-day, with no shade, and I was being burned alive in earnest. Whew!

Now, once a man can laugh — no matter at what — he is on the high road toward recovering his sense of proportion. Presently I was laughing at the Durham Council. Ridiculous — the way it had walloped Ned for his ideas about "one of those things no fellow can find out." And I laughed at Ned. Why had he fairly gone around on his bended knees begging to be walloped? What foolishness — not to say what manners!

But I was in no mood to despise his pluck, even then. I wished I had half that pluck for my own private use in the "taown o' Thorpe," drowsing placidly down yonder and looking like an idyllic cross-roads hamlet in some lovely landscape of Kaula's. Oh, wasn't I a coward to cringe, as I gazed at Thorpe? I laughed at myself for cringing.

Just at that moment called "psychological," I picked out from among the scattered farmsteads the abode of my treasurer, and there popped into my head a plan that made me roar aloud. There was no risk in it. I should be out of Thorpe in a brief space at longest. Besides, the more I thought the plan over, the more Christian it seemed. It would not only enable me to pay my debts (and if that isn't Christian, what is?) but to see to it that my successor got the wherewithal to pay his.

I sprang up, and went swinging along down the Beech Hill road, and descended upon my treasurer in his very barnyard. "Hello!" said I. "Fine day! I've got fine news for you, too—lawyers, this time—Bigelow, Shepley, and Stark."

Instead of his habitual "Jeerusalum crickets!" came a long, low whistle.

"Worm has turned," I went on, keeping my face straight by a mighty effort. "Unless you get out and hustle and pay up every last copper of my salary by June 28th, Bigelow, Shepley and Stark will take action."

He tilted back his broad-brimmed straw hat, mopped his brow, and stared at me in speechless, blank amazement.

"Jolly scrape the church'll be in then!" I continued, an involuntary grin stealing across my countenance. "You'll be famous. You won't get another minister here for thirty years."

Of course, I hadn't the faintest intention of suing. He might have known it. Who wouldn't have? But they are a gullible folk, the Thorpeans — and scary. He was.

He entreated me to be patient. To-morrow, "sure's I lived," he'd "turn to" and "take holt" and drum up my back salary "quick's a cat."

He kept his word, and I don't believe he took Thorpe into his confidence, either. It would not have added anything to his dignity. Quite the opposite, in fact. My suspicion is that he went about advising the Thorpeans to do the decent thing by me, and throw in a few smiles for good measure, so that I could go away in a lenient frame of mind and not give the "taown" a "black eye." I think this because their treatment of me became considerably less unamiable from that day forward.

As they say in the stories about gamblers, it appeared that "my luck had changed." Indeed, my star was in a bright ascendent, now, and grew to a perfectly dazzling radiance before I left Thorpe. For one thing, my rage over "the burning of Edward B. Archer" was cured, pretty completely, by the arrival of a marked copy of the *Glastonbury Telegram*. Lo and behold! Ned had received ordination at the hands of another Council and had been installed as pastor of an even more important

church than the one in Durham. Think of it — so soon!

Then, as if this were not enough to fill my cup to overflowing, there came a letter from away out in the Rocky Mountains. I have it still, and to-day I got it out, in order to reproduce it verbatim — thus:

“SAPPHIRA, June 10, 1897.

“*Reverend and Dear Sir:*

“My brother, Mr. Egbert C. Knight, whom you met at Durham, has written me that in his opinion you are the man we are looking for as successor to our beloved minister, the Rev. N. C. Wayland, who is leaving us for a year of advanced study in Germany.

“With a membership of seventy, ours is the largest church of our denomination in the State. We are free from debt, and can offer you a salary of \$1,200, which will be paid promptly — \$100 on the first day of each month without fail. We invite you to accept the pastorate for a period of one year, trusting that you will be glad to renew the contract at the end of that time and to keep on renewing it for many happy years to come.

“If this proposition strikes you as attractive, kindly wire me without delay and at my expense.

“Faithfully yours,

“ROBERTSON W. KNIGHT,
“Chairman, Church Committee.”

This much was typed — except, of course, the

signature — but the writer had added a few words in his own hand: “Kindly apply to my brother for transportation West for yourself and wife.”

Myself and wife!

I hurried off toward Elgin, my heart in my mouth — to ask Gertrude. And if fervent prayers had never ascended to the Great White Throne before from a perspiring young lover on a bicycle, they did that time.

VI

I BRAVE THE WILD AND WOOLLY

THAT shrewdest and most amusing of globe-trotters, Major "Gripsack" Kendall, somewhere observes that it is "a great waste" to go to Italy on your honeymoon. In that case you don't see Italy; all you see is the bride—bless her!—and a tour of East Buffalo or Milwaukee's back yard would serve exactly as well.

In this sense, it was doubtless a great waste for Gertrude and me to start off on our first big overland journey before the rice was well out of our hair. But while it is true that we saw next to nothing beside each other on our trip West, it is equally true that we were agog with a burning curiosity as we emerged from the last of many Pullmans at our journey's end.

"What a comical little place!" laughed Gertrude, and so it was, in all conscience.

A mining-camp originally and then a would-be metropolis, Sapphira seemed related to Nick Carter on one side of the family and to some Fifth Avenue belle on the other. Clouds of white alkali dust rolled up from a prairie-schooner rumbling along the "trail" near the station, and, passing the canvas-covered wagon at that very moment

and coming toward us, was a fine, trig, dashing buck-board, as natty a turn-out as heart could wish.

A quarter of a mile further on, lay the "city," stretched out in silhouette, a jumble of log cabins, eight-story buildings, one-story wooden shops with their fronts run up above their ridgepoles in a bragging bluff at importance, and beautiful stone mansions that would have attracted attention by their magnificence almost anywhere.

For a background, the mountains—queer attempts at mountains, however, for, although they had first-class alpine outlines, they seemed mere hillocks. Thirty-five miles of deceptive distance and the astonishing clearness of the air four-fifths of a mile above sea-level accounted for that.

Add to this hasty sketch a glare of blinding sunshine, an overplus of dust, a great sparsity of grass, and an almost complete absence of trees, and you have Sapphira as we saw it that morning.

Naturally I was most concerned to note the churches and guess which was mine. But not one single church was to be seen. No, not one!

I said to Gertrude, "I don't call it a comical little place. I call it horrible. Look! Not a church-spire anywhere!"

Just then the handsome buckboard drew up next our car, and a jovial, square-bearded gentleman in a huge Stetson hat called out my name, and lifted the hat, and jumped down to shake hands with us, saying, "Well, how do you like the country, now you've got here? Pretty fine, isn't it? Climb

aboard and we'll drive up to the house. Mrs. Knight is expecting you, but I guess she won't mind if we take our time and see the city on the way. How does that suit you?"

Such a "city" as we saw! I remember a saloon named "The Bucket of Blood," and an imposing Public Library, and frequent signs of "Licensed Gambling House," and a superb High School, and château-looking, villa-like "homes" built of brown "lava," and a vast quantity of "To Let" placards in Main Street, and a taxidermist's window (filled with stuffed coyotes and mountain lions and snakes), and a Crow Indian in a red and yellow blanket, and several ranchmen wearing "chaps" and sombreros and riding gaunt, nimble ponies with embossed leather saddles, and a Chinaman in blue overalls with a pickax on his shoulder, and scores of fashionably dressed Sapphirans, who appeared just to have stepped off Broadway.

Incidentally, I saw churches, and my heart sank. Tiny, cheap, ill-kept affairs, hard up for paint and uniformly without spires, they told their own story. Church-building Associations had erected them, back in the days of Vigilantism and tender-foot-baiting when Sapphira was a huddle of log-shacks, with only here and there a structure at all presentable. At that stage, these were seemly enough chapels, though decidedly unwelcome, and their donors imagined that, as Sapphira grew and improved, the chapels would grow and improve also. Why not? Who would have foreseen that while the Sapphirans were building gorgeous club-

houses and outrageously expensive châteaux, they would neglect their churches. They had done it, though, "good and plenty." And I could see that the poor, disgraced chapels, with their patched windows and curled shingles, bespoke a prevalence of out-and-out irreligion.

As I was saying, we were four-fifths of a mile up in the air, and the altitude has different effects on different people, "doping" some, exhilarating others. After our drive through the city, Gertrude could scarcely keep her eyes open, and Mrs. Knight took pity on her, and smuggled her upstairs for a nap, while I — never half so wide-awake in all my days — went out with Mr. Knight to call on the Rev. N. C. Wayland, the retiring pastor, in whose dismantled study he left me. Wayland, you remember, was about to start for New York and Bremen and partake of one of those nutritious feasts of reason that last a whole year in Germany.

It was none of my business, and too late anyhow, or I should have attempted his rescue, he seemed such an awfully nice fellow, simply brimming over with a fine, unaffected cordiality. As it was, I pitched in and helped him pack, and while we worked we talked — about Sapphira — and if the things that came out gave me the shudders, I have only myself to blame. I quizzed him.

Like the "taown o' Thorpe," Sapphira ought never to have been built. It was a "boom-city" — or had been. For twelve miles, the Grizzly Bear Valley was still staked out into town-lots, with nothing to show for it but the stakes. In the

city there were abundant visual proofs of a "busted boom"—enormous structures planned, with only one section erected and the process "stopped short" like Grandfather's clock; office furniture to be had for a song and whole buildings vacant in Main Street; houses that had cost fifty thousand dollars going begging for a purchaser at ten; police force cut down to eight patrolmen, despite the frequency of highway robberies; wooden sidewalks going to rack and ruin, with now and then a spear of coarse grass straggling up between the cracks; and a population of fifteen thousand dwindled to ten thousand, nominally, about eighty-five hundred actually.

There had been warrant enough for a temporary mining-camp at Sapphira; for a "metropolis," not the slightest. A long distance from any river, bereft of manufacturing opportunities, and a hundred miles from the nearest rival "city," with a flat railroad (single track and five cents a mile) that had bent out of its only natural and profitable route in order to "take in" the "metropolis," Sapphira had but one possible excuse for existing—namely gold-mines. And now the gold had "played out."

It was a capital joke of Dr. Johnson's about "the people on yonder isle who eked out a miserable existence by doing one another's washing," and yet a situation no community relishes. Sapphira didn't. During the previous year, two thousand Sapphirans had fled "back to God's country."

This was the first time I had ever heard the East called "God's country," but when Wayland went

on to discuss the religious outlook in Sapphira, I had no fault to find with that phrase. The city was full of people who had "left their religion in North Dakota." They had church "letters" locked away in trunks "up attic" and never presented. Adventurers by instinct and lured West by hopes of sudden wealth in mining, ranching, real-estate speculation, or "wild-cat" banking, they treated their Rocky Mountain episode as a kind of moral and spiritual vacation. You could do anything, out there, and "blame it on the altitude." When you had "made your pile," you would "round up" your dispersed ethics, and go "back to God's country."

But the churches had a lot to answer for, nevertheless. There were too many of them — eleven denominations in a city that boasted a church-going population of barely 1,500. Consequently they were all dowdy and poverty-stricken, anything but attractive to people who had come mainly from the cities of the "effete East" and were not accustomed to ecclesiastical "dinkiness." Worse, the churches had won for themselves a well-deserved contempt. Ministers booted out (for cause) from parishes in other parts of the country, had been "shipped West" to that clerical dump, Sapphira. At one time or another, nearly every church in town had had its scamp preacher, though at present all went creditably — unless you think it a discredit to employ green boys or the superannuated or the half-trained when you can't afford better.

You may guess the effect of all this on the stand-

ing of the clergy out there. I learned that "ministers, Chinamen, and Indians ranked about alike"; that if an "uplift" movement set in and the preachers supported it, it was a foregone fizzle; and that the outward deference the Sapphirans showed a minister was "chivalry."

Wayland spoke of going to call upon a saloon-keeper's wife who attended the church and said he had hoped her husband would be out, as it seemed to him that a man in that business would feel embarrassed on receiving a visit from a clergyman. Instead, the fellow came down in his shirtsleeves and was mighty condescending to Wayland, quite as if preaching had been as respectable an occupation as saloon-keeping — or, for that matter, professional gambling. One of "our leading families" — and one of the most popular — owed its fortune to an "old, established" gambling-hell.

However, I had it from Wayland that "our" people — the people of our church, I mean — were "far and away the grandest Christians you'll meet this side of Heaven." No wonder! Anybody who could resist the pagan social atmosphere of Sapphira, and stick to his principles through thick and thin, and take the consequence, must have magnificent grit and a more than common endowment of God's grace.

The thought of this stiffened my courage. It was inspiring. I rejoiced in having come. Sapphira's wickedness no longer dismayed me. I felt that I was going to captain a scant and terribly outnumbered little company of heroes in their fight

against overwhelming odds, and, knowing Gertrude as I did, I was sure that she would share my enthusiasm.

But why was Wayland retreating? I wondered, and came near asking him, and I think I might have, if he had not switched off to a subject which, after my worriments in Thorpe, touched a sensitive spot — the subject, that is, of money.

“You’ll have to calculate pretty cautiously,” he said, “for living is dear in Sapphira. You don’t sense it at first. When they stick you ten cents to ride on a conductorless street-car that stops short while the motorman comes in and collects the fares, you think it’s funny. It isn’t. And I suppose you imagine you’re rich on twelve hundred a year. You aren’t. Out here, with the ridiculous prices they charge for everything you’ve got to have, it’s about as lavish as eight hundred back East — or no, call it seven hundred. Don’t be too scared, though. You’ll get your pay, even if all Sapphira goes to the dickens the way it seems to be going now. Whatever happens, Robertson Knight will stand by the shebang. He’s solid. He’s pulled our church through many a wild time, and there’s spunk in him yet. You know the nick-name he goes by here? Old Ironsides the Second.”

After my chat with Wayland in his study, I went back to Mr. Knight’s, and found Gertrude on the piazza, talking with as exquisite a little woman as your fancy can picture — the delicate-featured, gentle, high-bred type, with exceedingly bright eyes and hair prematurely gray setting off the red

of her cheeks. This was Mrs. "Bob" Cummings, and it is just conceivable that you may have heard of "Bob." Before settling in Sapphira, he had been a brilliant newspaper correspondent, signing himself "Gaylord."

Now, it was in keeping with Mrs. "Bob's" punctilious observance of the proprieties for her to call upon Gertrude with the next thing to instantaneous promptitude, but somehow — because of her manner toward me, perhaps — I suspected there was more to it. I had heard that whenever a new minister arrived, somebody was practically sure to pop up and try to "own" him. One should be on one's guard.

Doubtless. And yet, where is the man who could keep on his guard when a woman of Mrs. Cummings's charm and endearing prettiness set out to "own" him? Why! here — right in my own boots. I leave it to Gertrude if I was ever "owned," though that is not saying I was not "counseled," and even then I leave it to Gertrude if the "counsels" I got were not hers as much as they were Mrs. "Bob's."

In a word, the problem before our church, according to the account I received, was — how to dodge total extinction. With a superfluity of denominations in a dwindling city, we must find a distinctive mission, or "bust." And the distinctive mission was not far to seek. The Unitarians had invaded Sapphira, and were gathering in malcontents from all the other churches. If we could stand for Liberalism without standing for Agnosticism, we should be doing a great work — indeed, an impera-

tively needed work. As a graduate of Byefield, I was precisely the man to undertake it.

It seems a ludicrous performance, viewed from this distance. "Bucking" Unitarianism, there in Sapphira, was no easy job. Instead of sprinkling the State with underpaid striplings and tarnished "has-beens" and venerable dry-as-dusts, the Unitarians had sent one man only, the biggest available. A trifle past fifty, handsome, polished, eloquent, and "scholarly," he was the sole "pulpit orator" within a radius of seven hundred miles. And a perfect lark he was having in Sapphira.

He started off with a string of scathing discourses on "The Follies of Presbyterianism," "The Mistakes of Wesley," "Self-contradictions in Congregationalism," "Myopia Among Baptists," "The Episcopal Legend," and more to match. Regularly each Monday morning, the *Sapphira Mountaineer* printed his sermon entire, Eastern Unitarians footing the bill — or so people said.

And such sermons! Witty, plausible, and "lighted by the last star of science" (to use his own modest phrase), they were read everywhere, making a tremendous sensation and winning converts, right and left, to the new gospel. For it was absolutely new in Sapphira. The dazzling "orator" has since tried his luck in the East, with less success; but in the Rockies he passed for a celebrity of the first magnitude.

Probably he would have succeeded less brilliantly if a certain inter-denominational weekly I could name had not been publishing warmed-over higher

criticism in the form of essays on "The Bible as Literature." Sapphira read them all—for we had a plethora of college graduates in the city—and the effect was decidedly unsettling.

Meanwhile, Dr. Lyman Abbott was preaching, week by week, on "The Theology of an Evolutionist." His sermons, appearing first in the *Brooklyn Eagle*, were reproduced as pamphlets, and reached Sapphira, where people circulated them with more zeal than discretion.

Then, too, a very entertaining book had appeared, reviewing the quarrels between the scientists and the theologians from Galileo's time, if not earlier, to poor, dear Mr. Darwin's. It was "yellow," I still think, but intensely readable, and signed by the ex-president of a rather famous university. Such a dust as it kicked up in Sapphira! Our Public Library took pains to keep it conspicuous among the newer books, with the result that almost everybody peeped inside. Those who peeped and gasped and banged the covers shut in a spasm of orthodox indignation were the worst hit. They went away considerably more stirred up than those who read it through, for they had failed to detect the spirit of rancorous animosity that colored (or discolored) the whole treatise.

You see, now, what a simple matter it was for an ultra-radical and nine-parts-agnostic Unitarian to swoop down on Sapphira and carry everything before him. Within a month, he "corralled our best people"—to quote his own words, an "eminent constituency"—lawyers, physicians, mining ex-

perts, engineers, teachers, bankers, and their altogether charming families. The other clergymen were scared half out of their wits. A little more, and this would make just the difference between pulling through alive and hanging up their homilistic fiddles for good and all — or so they fancied.

Looking back, it seems a foolish terror, though sufficiently blood-curdling at the time, for we were living in “an age of doubt,” so called. All over the country, the church had assumed the defensive — its problem, to hint that God might somehow survive Charles Darwin and “the consensus of opinion among the best German critics.” Preachers believed that Christians were everywhere in the state of mind of the miserably distracted Byefield theologues — “knocked silly” by the “new learning” — and, in Sapphira at least, it appeared that the alarm was not wholly without basis.

An odd situation, this of mine. I had come West to brave the “Wild and Woolly.” I had expected to “adapt myself.” I had planned to let the West have it, red-hot, in what I had been pleased to describe as “regular Rocky Mountain sermons.” In my innocence, I had trembled lest perchance the Wild and Woolly might “draw a bead.” And lo! here I was, in the very heart of the Rockies, to find it over-educated, if anything, and looking to me as a “thinker,” a “Christian scholar,” and — absurd! — an “apostle to the intellect.”

If all this had come to me through Wayland, I could have said, “Oh, bosh! The fellow is off for Germany, himself, and you can see the sort he is.”

But when it reached me through one of my own parishioners, who called it "a case of sink or swim" — well, "the woman tempted me and I did eat."

Not too hastily, though. At luncheon that day, Mr. Knight said to me, "You'll have to take life easy at first, and not 'rustle,' or the altitude will slay you, sure as shooting. Give us an old sermon next Sunday. Nobody will know. And nobody will growl if you put off calling till you've begun to get acclimated."

However, I laid a foundation for my campaign that very evening. Remembering the advertisement, "Unitarian Literature Free," I wrote East for a supply, somewhat in the spirit of the broad-minded parson who subscribed to a Democratic paper "in order to keep a weather eye on Beelzebub."

The next day, Gertrude and I looked about for quarters, as there was no parsonage, and picked out a boarding-house where, none of the boarders being connected with our church in any way, we should not be "owned."

But, while we were anxious to avoid being "owned," we were even more anxious to be popular in that house. The boarders would talk. To good effect or ill, the impression we made would go far and wide, there in town, and we were considerably puzzled to know how to take our new comrades. It is rather a jolt, arriving in the Wild and Woolly with one's head filled with recollections of Buffalo Bill and getting culture thrown at one, first thing — especially when licensed gambling dens and the Bucket of Blood saloon have seemed to belie the cul-

ture. It is confusing. And, what with the altitude, and our strange surroundings, and the honey-moon still raging, we were confused enough already.

Sometimes I tell Gertrude that the same special Providence that takes care of little children, intoxicated persons, and the United States of America, also takes care of new ministers, and we had an instance that noon.

On our way downstairs at luncheon time, Gertrude whispered to me, "Jim, I'm scared simply blue!" and as we reached the dining-room door she dropped behind a little. Just at that moment, a lovely, flaxen-haired two-year-old at the nearest of three long tables looked up at me, and, in a joyous baby treble shouted, "*Daddy!*"

Talk about inspirations! Quick as a flash, I gave the infant an answer that set the whole crowd in a roar and prepared them to take us to their bosoms. It was not tact on my part. It was not insight. It was not policy. It was mere impulse, but it hit the target right in the very bull's-eye.

What I answered was: "Baby! *You're a liar!*"

VII

MY LYMAN ABBOTT PERIOD

THE wildest imaginable jollity set in after that, for Sapphira dearly loves a joke, and word had gone out that the new minister and his wife were "hot Willies." Our life, both in the boarding-house and outside it, was "one grand sweet circus." The church people flocked to see us. They showered us with invitations — for drives, for tramps, for picnics, for mountain parties. And we realized that Wayland had not overpraised them in the least. Finer people never breathed.

So we were in great spirits, and eager for our first Sunday, when we should see my congregation assembled at church. It came, and with it — zounds, what a "facer" !

Where were those seventy members? Where the hundred other church-goers the seventy members implied? Oh! where indeed?

Tiny as the church was, a sea of upturned camp-chair bottoms confronted me, although, as I afterward learned, the attendance was "something unusual, and very encouraging." It numbered forty-two. All that!

Seventy members, yes — some of them "back in God's country" to stay, some of them in Paradise,

and, of the residue, several already packing up to leave! Obviously, it was a time for strong measures, "sink or swim," and if a "distinctive mission" could save us, then ho! for the "distinctive mission"! The quicker the arrival of "Unitarian Literature, free," and the sooner I could begin luring in outsiders by a campaign for "progressive Orthodoxy," the better it would be for all concerned. Even Gertrude thought so.

Thanks to a mania for proselyting which the Unitarians are quick to deny, the Literature reached us with astonishing promptness, and Gertrude and I went at it with avidity, devouring pamphlet after pamphlet in our effort to get the range of the enemy's trenches.

At first, it appeared that we had been Unitarians from our infancy up without knowing it, so cleverly were the Unitarian doctrines toggled out in the verbiage of Orthodoxy — for instance: "Unitarians believe that Jesus incarnated the divine." Happily, Byefield had forearmed me against that trick. I laughed. It was Byefield's dodge over again.

Next we learned that Unitarianism must be sound because Lowell had been a Unitarian, and Emerson, and Longfellow, and practically everybody with gray matter under his skull. "Great logic!" said Gertrude. "According to that, Romanism must be true because Christopher Columbus was a Catholic, and I suppose we've even got to swallow mythology — Homer did!"

In one of the pamphlets, we read that it was ridiculous to Christianize the heathen. In "every age

and every land," God had revealed Himself to men. Instead of sending missionaries to Buddhists and Hindoos, we should sit at their feet and learn. "Trash!" said Gertrude, indignantly. "Where would the Unitarians themselves be, if the Apostle Paul had gone on that principle? Why! they'd be serving up human sacrifices, Druid style, even to this day, or maybe worshipping Odin."

I added, "And don't you think it's funny, the charity they show for 'the great ethnic religions' and how red-headed they get when you mention Baptists?"

It developed, moreover, that Unitarians "disapproved of emotionalism" and "addressed the intellect." So? Then what was Unitarianism? A religion? It seemed to us that it was a philosophy — very interesting and perhaps somewhat plausible — and at the same time an undeniably noble scheme of ethics. A religion — hardly! Take emotionalism out of religion and mighty little remains. We thought of St. John, of Martin Luther, of Savonarola at his best, and of Christian martyrs in the Coliseum. We thought of the old Hebrew prophets, and Christ and His disciples. What was it that had sent Christianity conquering its way through the world — the militant Christianity I had seen at Northfield, for instance, and in the rescue mission, and among the Crusaders? Its "address to the intellect"? If that was all Christianity had a right to offer, then how stupid of me not to recognize in Byefield and the "consensus of opinion among the best German critics" the very essence of religion!

And what, as a matter of fact, were the Unitarians gaining by their "address to the intellect"? Were they making converts, the country over? On the whole, they were losing ground. If they were raising unlimited spiritual hob in Sapphira, just at present, it proved nothing. Wait a few years. The First Unitarian Church of Sapphira would be as dead as a door-nail.

But we could not afford to wait. Our own little church would die first. And, while it seemed grotesque to lock horns with the Unitarians' eloquent pulpiteer, I could do a shrewder thing — steal his thunder.

My Byefield training had fitted me for that. I knew the higher criticism as thoroughly as he did, and I, too, was "lighted by the last star of science." What of it? The vital truths of every-day Christianity had not suffered in the least. If there were malcontents, made so by "an age of doubt," why should they not come to me, instead of to the big Unitarian orator? I had more to give them than he had.

This was nearly twenty years ago, please remember. Since then, I have known a great many Unitarians, the vast majority of whom I have admired though deploring their rejection of what I consider a cardinal doctrine of the faith. Despite that, they have seemed to me devout, reverent, spiritual, consecrated, and — yes, profoundly emotional. The Unitarian clergyman I know best is a perfect dynamo of feeling. I love him for it.

Be it understood, then, that what I say of the Uni-

tarian movement in the Sapphira of my day is not intended as a sweeping or as necessarily a permanent indictment. For aught I can tell, even "Unitarian Literature, free," may have taken on a far less bumptious air since the epoch I call, not without a sardonic grin in secret, my Lyman Abbott Period.

A fool there was, and I was that fool — as you shall see — though a well-meaning fool, prepared to risk something (my ecclesiastical neck, maybe) in doing my "duty." For all I could predict, I might be scampering away like a Rocky Mountain jack-rabbit, presently, with a dozen green boys and old fogies at my heels, bellowing, "Death to the heretic!" Lyman Abbott was catching the dingbats already. A miniature Lyman Abbott, such as I had set up to be, might catch miniature dingbats fully as tremendous in their effect.

To be more definite about the campaign I planned, let me take a concrete case — namely, Jonah's — and show how I meant to proceed. I began with the assumption that the malcontents had been brought up to regard the Book of Jonah as literal and veracious history, and that it was now a stumbling block to their faith.

According to "the consensus of opinion among the best German critics," Jonah never wrote "Jonah," for Jonah never existed. According to "the last star of science," no whale can swallow a man, nor could a man abide in the belly of any known or unknown sea-monster without being digested. The story, as it has come down to us, "is pure fiction."

Well, so is the story of the Prodigal Son, and so is the story of the Widow's Mite, and so is the story of the Ten Talents. Nobody lies awake nights worrying about that. Why should any one feel the foundations of his religion going all to smithereens when it dawns upon him that perhaps the story of Jonah and the Whale is a parable also?

Who were the incommensurable nincompoops, really — the old-fashioned Christians who swallowed Jonah, whale included, to the good of their souls, or the wondrous logicians who, just because Jonah turned out a fiction, concluded instantly that there was no God in Heaven, no life beyond the grave, no rational rule of conduct save "Eat, drink, and be merry" ?

Suppose, now, that we should gulp down "the consensus of opinion among the best German critics" and tag after the much-vaunted "last star of science." The parable had still its astounding force, especially in Sapphira. Here were servants of the Most High, divinely commissioned, like Jonah, to preach the fear of God to pagans. They were to do it by the decency of their behavior. If, like Jonah, they fled the responsibility, woe betide them! They would be made infernally uncomfortable before they got through with it. The very pagans would kick them overboard. They would be a hissing and a by-word, in a fix every whit as ignominious as Jonah's inside the whale's belly. Perhaps some were in pretty much that fix already. If so, let them repent, and beg for mercy, and mend their wicked ways while it was yet day.

I have picked out the Jonah incident to use as an example of my miniature Lyman Abbottism because it is always the open season for Jonah and I am running precious little risk of rousing doubts and misgivings in any reader's mind. Besides, it was typical. I wanted to come straight up to the so-called barriers to belief, look at them squarely, and show that, far from being the barriers they seemed, they were open doors into a larger and more inspiring faith. Instead of leading my people into Rationalism and treating them as the Unitarian demi-god was treating that "eminent constituency" of his, I wanted to lead them nearer than ever to Christ.

A fool there was, and I was that fool. Results proved it.

A great furor greeted the opening of my miniature Lyman Abbottite campaign. Strangers poured in. I no longer looked down upon a sea of upturned camp-chair bottoms. I was winning a "constituency"—I might even say an "eminent" constituency. Sapphira's "best people" came. Mrs. "Bob" Cummings was in ecstasies, and my flock in general seemed pleased, while Gertrude—married to the fool and too blindly loyal to recognize his folly—predicted triumphs unmeasured for our "distinctive mission." I even heard echoes of a small conniption fit among the Unitarians. Oh, glorious—and splendidly, gorgeously idiotic!

It was not long before I noticed that, although strangers came flocking, they were different strangers each time. I was preaching to a procession.

Gertrude noticed it, too, but said I couldn't expect to bind them hand and foot and stick them in a plaster cast all at once. I must be patient. If they had come, even for a first inquisitive visit to our church, it showed they would come again. Wait! It would take more than a few Sundays to found a "constituency." Rome wasn't built in a day.

What the pair of us failed to see was the motive that brought them. In my heart, I do not believe that they were malcontents in any dignified sense. They were not seeking remedies for doubt and unrest, or turning their backs on their own churches because they found no solace for a distraught spirit there. They wanted to be shocked — for the fun of it. If I had advertised a burlesque show, like the one that papered the billboard of Sapphira with its proclamation of "40 La Belle Parisiennes 40 — Positively the Limit of Sensation," I should merely have been enlarging the fiasco a few diameters without essentially altering its nature.

When people came, from that sort of impulse, they met with a harrowing disappointment. To be sure, it made them sit up with a jerk to see an Orthodox clergyman deal frankly with Evolution, with the New Theology, and with the Higher Criticism. They had never looked on at such doings. But when I came out on traditional ground each time, fundamentally old-fashioned and Evangelical, and told them straight from the shoulder that the "new learning" had not invalidated one essential of the ancient faith, they were as bored, practically, as if the "40 Parisiennes 40" had repented of their

spangles and tights and got religion, right there on the stage, and, for the rest of the performance, arrayed themselves as nuns.

From the sensation-seeker's point of view, the big Unitarian ran an incomparably better show than mine. No anti-climax there! Instead, a well-sustained crescendo culminating in agnosticism "lighted by the last star of science."

Now, when you find multitudes of people making a dash for agnosticism, in a cloud of dust with sparks flying out, it is always within the range of possibilities that they want moral emancipation even more than they want spiritual emancipation. I don't mean to imply that the Unitarian preached loose living. On the contrary, he preached "salvation by character." But character from what motive? Accountability to a personal God? No, accountability to the race and for the betterment of the species, so that the same evolution that had plucked *Homo Sapiens* out of monkeydom might continue his progress toward perfection. As for a personal God, what puerility! We had "outgrown all crude anthropomorphism" and should worship the main power-house of the universe. I wondered why he still referred to the Father in Heaven as "He." Why not as "It"?

Perhaps there are philosophers, somewhere, who can lead beautiful, moral, pseudo-Christian lives in compliment to the main power-house of the Universe and with an eye to the up-boosting of post-graduate orang-outangs in their climb toward an ethical zenith, even though they recognize that the

ethical zenith is not to be attained for many a century and only by fellows they will never set eyes on. Yet is not this a rather academic, artificial, high-brow motive, likely to lay hold of philosophers, perhaps, though hardly of the men and women one ordinarily meets? In Sapphira, we were not at all extensively over-run with philosophers.

Whereas, we were much too extensively over-run with guilty-feeling adventurers, who shuddered when they thought of the God they had defied, and were mightily tickled with the news that they had only a main power-house of the Universe to consider. Who's afraid of a main power-house? And when they were told to "advance the race," it was no great spur to their conscience. Jolly, optimistic, ebullient chaps themselves, they could answer, "The race is doing fine, thank you — swimming on its back and smoking a cigar!"

This was the second point where my miniature Lyman Abbottism "fell down." If strangers looked to me for release from accountability to an ever-present and all-seeing personal God, they discovered that they were shopping at the wrong counter.

Meanwhile, fidgets developed among my own people. I had inferred from what Mrs. "Bob" Cummings said, that incipient Unitarianism — the premonitory questionings and uneasinesses, that is — were dangerously prevalent throughout my parish. In "an age of doubt," this seemed probable. I believed her, for I had yet to learn that, as a matter of serious fact, there had never been any "age

of doubt" and, please God, never will be. At times, of course, the "intellectuals" get alarmingly "dis-oriented"; at times, theologians talk their uncertainties in public, when they ought to hold their tongues with both hands and, if that won't do, both feet; at times, some phrase-monger turns loose a bogy like that "age of doubt"; but the great mass of the people have no more notion as to what caused the little carnival of fuss and feathers than the European peasants know what caused the World War of 1914. Simple, trusting, devoted souls that they are, they go on believing, just as before. Instead of answering doubts already raised in my people's minds, I was raising doubts it would have taken years to answer.

No wonder they complained! I wish, now, that they had complained more promptly, and that the first of them to object had not slipped quietly away to other churches. As it was, months went by before I began to suspect what was wrong. Then a Mrs. Baker said to me one day, "Don't you think you could give us more *practical* sermons once in a while?"

Aha! Hungry sheep looking up — and not being fed! I might have guessed it. Hungry sheep want food — not discourses on food, not chemical analyses of food, not studies in the dietetic value of foods; they want food, and plenty of it, and grace before meals. Here I was, lecturing instead of preaching, arguing instead of pleading, and setting up for that most useless of unpardonable nuisances, an "apostle to the intellect." People aren't saved

through their intellects. They aren't even kept saved through their intellects. Religion is first and last an "affair of the heart."

When I call this my "Lyman Abbott Period," I am far from intending a slur upon that clergyman's good name. "The life of God in the soul of man" — how often I had heard him define religion like that, and how clearly I appreciated the warmth and tenderness and sympathetic brotherliness in his own big heart! But what a difference between his situation and mine! Well on in years before his adventure among the militant 'isms and 'ologies, he was fully formed, spiritually, and had the wisdom of long experience as a pastor. An "apostle to the intellect"? Even in his most theological moods, he had never ceased to be an apostle to the heart. All during his doctrinal campaign, he was ministering to the needy, the suffering, the bereaved — sitting beside beds of agony, standing next open graves. It kept the glow in him.

And the glow was cooling in me. I was as yet unformed, spiritually, and the constant dwelling upon intellectual problems chilled the fervor of my soul. How it would have gratified the great Unitarian, had he known that I, too, was becoming "unemotional"! And the parish work that should normally have counteracted the sag in the temperature failed for two reasons. First, I had practically no parish — a mere coterie — and, during the ten months of our stay in Sapphira, it was rarely that any one appealed to me in trouble. I went calling with Gertrude, making the rounds

faithfully and pleasantly, and then beginning over.

The other reason was, everybody insisted on my being a mighty "mixer." I was to "get hold of outsiders." I was to do it by tearing around socially, accepting innumerable invitations, and being a "darned hilarious cuss" to the glory of God. Gertrude and I must lose no opportunity of vindicating our reputation as "hot Willies." In no other way could we beat the bushes for stray sheep and lambkins and wheedle them into the fold.

It was huge fun, of course. All the fall, and through part of the winter we went it steep and had the lark of a lifetime — till Gertrude dropped out, for cause. If I refrain from naming the cause, it is not from prudery but from a feeling that it was too sacred.

Perhaps you will say that all this social jollity, considering its object, should have kept me warmly interested in people on their religious side and prevented my lapse into a chilly intellectualism. So it should have, theoretically. But they were a shallow lot, those outsiders — capital good company, effervescent enough playmates, and yet amazingly devoid of seriousness. Moreover, Byefield was not so very far back in the past. The old clamminess struck through to the surface again. I was miserable. Gertrude noticed it — poor girl! — and thought I was anxious about her.

Well, so I was, in more ways than one. What she failed to understand was my anxiety in looking ahead through the years of my ministerial future (granting that I was to have one) and wonder-

ing what was to become of Gertrude's ill-chosen husband. I was a failure in Sapphira. Despite frantic efforts, I touched success with my fingertips, never gripping it. Swarms of jovial people drifted into my congregation — and out of it. I was not building up the church. Perhaps I was even pulling it down. To make matters worse, I was afraid to leave.

There is an old saying, "Never raise the devil till you're sure you can lay him." There ought to be another: "Once you've raised the devil, don't run till he's laid." I had "raised the devil," theologically, in my church — started doubts where none had been before, set people to thinking, awakened all manner of wretched misgivings — and, plainly, I must stay on and undo the mischief — at least, so far as possible. It was as if I had taken my parishioners half through Byefield. To desert them now, unless out of sheer necessity, would be criminal.

For excellent reasons, I avoided troubling Gertrude with my problems, and carrying them alone was torment, becoming the more painful as time went on. And how uneventfully time passed — for Sapphira, where I had been told "things happened"! To be sure, some few things did. One day, two young swells got to fighting, right at the corner of Summit Avenue and Carson Place. Another time, the great Mrs. T. Ralston Bowen horse-whipped a man in Main Street. And for a while, we had a "hold-up" specialist in our "midst," but little came of it, for he inadvertently tackled the

Episcopal rector, one night, and was left for dead. Beyond these rather mild occurrences, nothing. The good old shooting days were gone. Although every other man in Sapphira "packed a gun," from habit chiefly, nobody "drew."

Still, I felt that the period of practical uneventfulness was not to last much longer. Something noticeable would "happen"—to me; possibly—and I was in this oddly expectant mood when, one day along in May, a new boarder appeared—a rather common, rather stupid-looking girl of twenty or thereabouts, pretty in a nursemaidish way, with small features, big, bossy-cow eyes, and cheeks like rose-leaves. She piqued my curiosity, for, while her speech was ungrammatical, her clothes might have come straight from the Rue de la Paix.

When I asked Gertrude what she made of it, "Oh! the usual story, I suppose," she said, not much interested—"somebody's struck pay ore again on some Peerless Jennie Claim or other. It's the Townsends' case over again, I guess."

Nearly a week went by, and I had ceased to puzzle about the new-comer, when to my surprise, our landlady nabbed me after luncheon one day, shunted me into the parlor, closed the door, and said, "Tell me—what do you make of that Miss Richmond?"

I was on my guard in an instant. "Why do you ask?" I said.

"Because of her mail. It comes in large envelopes, and they feel as if they went on over the original ones, and they are all addressed in the same hand-writing, even when three come at once."

"Well?" said I.

"It looks suspicious," the woman went on. "Suppose she had run away from somewhere, and a third party was getting her letters and re-directing them under a false name, wouldn't it work out like this?"

I was up in arms at that. "I wouldn't do anything hasty," I said.

"But listen," she protested. "Hear the whole thing. The girl says she's here to be near her aunt. If that's so, why doesn't the aunt come to the house? Instead, Miss Richmond is always going to see her aunt, and when she comes back there's a man with her. When they get within a block of here, they stop at the corner and say good-by. I've watched from my window, and I've seen it four times now."

There are moments when one's mind can turn completely upside down, and not very sensationally at that. Evolution went quietly under, along with the higher criticism and the new theology. The Crusaders and rescue work came top. I was myself again. Anti-Unitarianism lost its tang. At the moment, my "distinctive mission" was to look after that foolish girl; for I knew what was up — perfectly. I remembered those expensive dresses.

Whether I showed it or not I can't say, but it took an effort to appear composed as I begged our landlady to be cautious and wait and, meanwhile, to shift Gertrude and me over to the table where Miss Richmond was. I promised to report anything we might learn.

Because of my desire to shield Gertrude, partly,

and partly because I wanted her to act as an unprejudiced observer, I was careful not to tell her why we had changed our seats, and I was fairly sure that Miss Richmond had no suspicions. True enough! Little by little, she let out things. Putting them together, we traced her westward route from her home in southern Illinois to Denver, where she had dropped out of the party she had been traveling with. I concluded that her sense of security under a false name was what made her unwary about admitting so much — or was she always as stupid as that?

I kept "standing off" the landlady's questions, saying, "Wait another day. Give me time to work up a complete case." As for Gertrude, she seemed to hold contentedly to her first theory. Nothing disturbed it. So I was left to act alone.

One afternoon, I went down to the sitting-room to return a book I had borrowed, and there was Miss Richmond. There was no one else there. It was the opportunity I had waited for.

She looked up. "Miss Richmond," I said, "I want to ask you something? I can't help it. Why have you run away from your people?"

She was on her feet in an instant — simply furious. "*It ain't true,*" she blurted. "*It's no such thing!*"

I said, "Miss Richmond, I know the whole story from beginning to end, but I'm not going to tell it, because I don't want to hurt you. All I want is to help you out of a bad scrape before it's too late."

There was an accusation in that and, stupid

though she was, she saw it. "I ain't done nothing wrong!" she said. "Honest, I ain't!" and burst out crying. I was glad I had shut the door. But doors in boarding-houses don't always stay shut. I had to be quick.

What followed is a mere jumble of impressions in my memory, for I was excited at the time. I hope I was gentle—in my manner, at least—but my words must have stabbed thick and fast, for her defense broke down completely. Before five minutes were up, I was telling her she was headed for the gutter, and that in three years, or five at most, she would wind up in the dissecting room—awful things to say!—hideous!—and yet the solemn, literal truth. "Go home to your mother!" I pleaded.

"But—but—" she protested, the tears streaming down her cheeks, "what if my mother would be scornful?"

You can guess, of course, what I said then, and the way I went on to urge and coax, and how I passed from that to an appeal, straight from my heart, in the name of my Saviour and hers.

I paused. What more was there to say?

After a moment, she said, "You are a good man," and wiped her eyes, and got up from the chair she had sunk into, and walked slowly toward the door.

I let her go. It was half a victory; to-morrow I would clinch it.

She seemed in great spirits at breakfast next day, and I said to myself, "She's decided; she's going home." But when she went out for a walk, pres-

ently, and I followed and caught up, it appeared that she "simply must" stay in Sapphira till Mademoiselle could finish the last of her new gowns. Then — "oh, honest!" — she would leave.

Would she, though? Could she? I had my doubts. I should still have had doubts, even if I could have put her aboard a train for home and seen it start.

One point was proved, however. Things could "happen" in Sapphira. They could "happen" to me. And, though I little guessed it, things were "happening" to my church. As we were sitting at luncheon only a few hours later, "Jack" Dickinson burst in, eyes flaming, and called out excitedly, "The First National's *gone to smash!*"

A Mrs. Porter, nicknamed the Cattle Queen, was opposite us. Instantly, her knife and fork fell out of her hands. "O-o-o-oh!" she shrieked. "I just don't care! It's mean — *mean* — MEAN!"

Well, rather! The First National had swallowed \$45,000 of the Cattle Queen's money.

Somebody said, "Think of Robertson Knight. It's Robertson's finish."

I turned to Gertrude. "Then we're going back to God's country," I said.

And so we were, for my treasurer came and confessed that he had concealed a debt that had been growing, growing, ever since before we arrived. No help from poor, faithful, devoted Robertson Knight this time. I could stay, if I liked, but at a reduced salary. Eight hundred was his idea. What did I say to it?

I said, "The decent thing is to take myself off your hands as quick as ever I can. We'll go Thursday."

That was three days ahead, and the three days were a whirl of good-by calls, with intervals of packing and, on Gertrude's part, intervals of gently besieging Miss Richmond. For I had had to tell Gertrude, even though I chose the less of two evils and forgot to tell our landlady.

Thursday we left for the East, our seven-foot green railway tickets duly marked to allow stop-overs at a town in southern Illinois, as Miss Richmond — I still call her that, though she had admitted who she was — went with us.

In another mood, when I am less anxious to get on with the story, ask me about the time we had bringing the girl's mother to terms. It took all my tact, and all Gertrude's, and there were moments when we thought nothing would avail. But we stuck it out, and won. And when we started on our way once more, Gertrude said to me, "Jim, if I should die when the baby comes, make them remind me of this before it gets dark."

VIII

"OUT"

EVERY baseball "fan" knows the twinge in that little word "out"—which is why I am taking it in preference to "steeple-chasing" as a chapter-head. Steeple-chasing sounds gay. It suggests toot horns and pink coats and fiery steeds—whoop-la; whereas, there is nothing at all sporty about "steeple-chasing" in its technical, ecclesiastical sense, meaning the pursuit of a pastorless parish by a parishless pastor.

I was "out," now. I was as grotesquely, ignominiously "out" as the celebrated Mr. Casey in the ballad. Problem: To crawl back in.

We went to Gertrude's people "on a visit." It saved our pride to call it that, though we were refugees, like a pair of escaped Belgians in war-time. We knew it, and so did the "folks." How they tried to comfort us! "A man of my talents would not long remain unemployed. Weren't there scores of vacant pulpits? When the churches heard I was at liberty, there would be a regular scrimmage to get at me! I had made a splendid fight, and won my spurs."

This was consoling—or at least my appreciation of the motive was. No doubt it cheered the

refugees in England to read in the London papers, "The bravest of these are the Belgians."

Meanwhile, I was "in the hands of my friends" — only too literally. Think a moment, and you will notice a difference between a preacher's plight, when "out," and that of — well, say a jobless book-keeper.

Quite without impropriety, an accountant can walk in, almost anywhere, and say with a smile, "Good morning, gentlemen! I learn you're looking for a star book-keeper. I'm your man. Give me a trial, won't you?" And they do.

But just imagine a clergyman's going at a church in that style! Fancy his saying, "Take my word for it, brethren; I can preach like a sublimated angel of light. At pastoral work, I'm a charmer. Incidentally, my references — look them over and see — give me credit for profound wisdom and the loveliest Christian character you ever beheld. I advise you to snap me up quick."

Instead, he must be coy, like a girl who "gives a side-glance and looks down," though, again like the girl, he is permitted to "stand in" with the match-makers.

Well, I had friends enough at Byefield, no great distance from Gertrude's home, and a lot of ecclesiastical match-making went on there. When churches nudged Byefield for hints, why should not some professor suggest me? Happy thought!

Besides, I could run in town and register at a kind of matrimonial agency our denomination had established there. The old gentleman in charge

was officially a friend to all unemployed clergymen.

But I must say my experiences were not very encouraging at the outset. When I visited Byfield, to spread the news that "Barkis was willin'," the professors seemed bored. I had come at the wrong time; with Commencement at hand, they were scratching for a new brood of theological chickens, and, while I brought excellent letters of recommendation — for instance one "to whom it might concern" from Robertson Knight of Sapphira — they had seen such letters too often.

I knew perfectly the way to wake them up. Had I told of my miniature Lyman Abbottism, the best in the house would have been none too good for me. I couldn't. I was ashamed.

As it was, they hemmed and hawed — not unkindly, quite, though a bit annoyingly nevertheless, and "would see what could be arranged."

So would the fatherly old gentleman at the intelligence office in town. He was charmingly considerate, even sympathetic, at first. But when he asked what salary I expected and I named twelve hundred, he simply gasped. I gathered that no prosperous church ever applied to him. Instead, it picked the pulpit of some other church.

Still, he would enter me on the waiting list, as "something attractive might turn up, you know," and "wouldn't I take the trouble to drop in from time to time and talk things over?"

I was not scared, exactly. Twice ere this, "calls" had dropped out of a clear sky. Another

might. And I could write to my friends among the clergy, or go and hunt them up. If I was anxious, it was because of Gertrude and the worry the thing might occasion her, despite her preoccupation over enchanted little white dresses and embroidered creations all gay with infantile ribbons. Moreover, there were her "folks." They had set apart a spare room, called my "study," so my course was mapped out for me. I must bury myself in work, and I did, not entirely without profit.

Several articles I wrote that summer for (though as yet not in) our denominational weekly brought sixty dollars in the aggregate. And now and then I tucked a sermon and a nighty into my grip and went out "supplying." I hated to go, I was so uneasy about Gertrude, but I earned forty-five dollars by it, and you won't blame me for being rather keen on money, with the doctor's bill mounting up, and up, and up, and hospital expenses ahead, and nobody knew how many weeks of trained nurse after that. And what of the future? I had barely supported two. How was I to support three?

Every few days I looked in on the fatherly old gentleman at the employment agency. "I'm sorry," he kept saying. "Nothing you would care for just now." And then he would add, "It's a pity you feel obliged to hold out for twelve hundred. Not that I blame you, of course; the laborer is worthy of his hire, and I don't doubt your consecration."

As time went on, his remarks grew more pointed. "Let's get right down to hard-pan. Seriously,

wouldn't it be wiser for you to ask less and get it than to stick to your guns and perhaps be left stranded?"

One day, along in late August, he welcomed me with exceptionally mellow cordiality, saying, enthusiastically, "Here's a glorious chance, my boy — a fine little church back in the country! They've been without a minister for more than a year, waiting to select just the right man, and I haven't a doubt you'd suit. Splendid parish! You'll be happy there. You won't get rich, but you'll have enough and to spare. Beautiful surroundings, too — why! travelers have described the region as a pocket Switzerland. You may have heard of the place — a town called Thorpe."

There are times in our lives when the services of a layman are indispensable. I could say nothing unfit for publication, so said nothing at all — that is at the moment. Somehow I managed to pull myself together, thank my aged friend for his suggestion, decline as gracefully as I knew how, and flee.

I understood the waiting list now. The fatherly old gentleman had been cheapening me, month by month, hoping to prepare me (literally by prayer and fasting) to accept anything. Waiting-list! No, call it the sweating system.

From his point of view, of course, it was no such thing. He had an eye single to the churches and their welfare. If he could have starved a four-thousand-dollar man into a four-hundred-dollar job, he would have "read his title clear to mansions in the skies" and a crown of pure gold.

With September, came the usual returning hordes of clergyman from Europe and the summer resorts, and several letters I had written and heard nothing from got answered — one in particular. In the kindness of his heart, Dr. Henry Walton Ainsworth had arranged for me to “candidate,” if I liked, at Heathcote.

I did not like. I disliked — strongly. I detested the idea of candidating — there, of all places, for I had heard that the brethren up in Heathcote had been considering candidate after candidate ever since February. People become critical — hypercritical, in fact — after a debauch like that. It comes to pass that an aspirant for their favor is more or less in the plight of the African Dodger outside a circus tent. “Three shots for a nickel, gentlemen. Hit the nigger’s head once, you get a good cigar; hit it twice, you get two cigars; hit it three times, you get half a dollar.”

Still, it was an attractive field, apart from that, and — God forgive me! — I went.

How do you imagine a man feels, candidating? Like a woman fishing for a proposal? Oh, worse than that! Let me tell you.

Very possibly you remember a painting called “The Choice of a Model” — a group of artists inspecting a naked girl. I felt like that girl — or rather as that girl would have felt if she had not been a professional model and hardened. And besides, there was the sense of criminality. Think of preaching the gospel of Jesus for show — to demonstrate your talent; praying to the Father in

Heaven for show; opening your innermost soul for show! Monstrous!

Oh, those critical, prying, almost prurient faces, there in the church! I was in torments — till I said to myself, “I can’t do it! I won’t! It’s indecent — blasphemous!” adding, next moment, “Promise not to accept a call, even if you should get one; then this won’t be candidating.” I promised, and went ahead. On those terms it was like preaching to the heathen — rather exhilarating.

I wish I could top this off with a story of getting the call; whereas, no.

Now, it is all very well to revolt against candidating, if you are comfortably settled, and don’t mind staying on, and have reason to believe that sooner or later some committee from a preacherless parish will come along, prospecting, spot you for a simply invaluable nugget, and carry you off in triumph before you even know who they are. But what if you aren’t settled and haven’t a hope of being settled and still revolt against candidating — ah! what then?

“Out for keeps,” it looks like.

It looked like that to me. Although I had hesitated about entering the ministry, and fled Byefield Seminary for a year, and blazed up in a small bon-fire of rebelliousness after “the burning of Edward B. Archer,” I was for the first time seriously considering the chance of becoming an ex-clergyman for life.

I could hear the worldlier of my friends rehearsing choice phrases with which to congratulate me

on my "escape." I could also hear what they would say behind my back — mild substitutes for such terms as "renegade preacher," "turn-coat," "mugwump," "deserter." And I could hear myself explaining and apologizing — insisting I had never been "fired," and knowing how fishy that would sound. I could see my name with the "Reverend" stripped off it, for conscience' sake.

An enthusiastic moper would have had the frolic of his life over a situation like mine, but to me it was purgatory. I went to the city and registered at a teachers' agency, though I could ill afford the fee and it was the "closed season" for teachers anyhow. One day I bearded a managing editor in his den, told him I was a clergyman, and said I thought myself qualified to handle church news. "Church news!" he exclaimed. "What do we want of a clergyman for that? When the churches keep straight, it isn't news; when they don't, any reporter knows enough to scent scandal and 'play it up.'" Another time, I was looking over the daily column headed "Help Wanted: Male," and saw an advertisement offering sudden wealth to "Gentleman with literary gifts, college graduate preferred." In my extremity, I went and applied.

On a door in the eighth story of a tall building, I read the gold-lettered inscription, "Grantham Publishing Company; Mark Shenstone, President." Inside — oh, splendor! Expensive rugs, a profusion of solid mahogany, everything ostentatiously moneyed and magnificent! I was piloted down a

long corridor past alcoves where prosperous-looking subalterns sat at handsome desks, to the private sanctum of the President.

Unused to such glories, I squirmed in my boots, and supposed I was making a bad impression. Not a bit of it. The great Shenstone received me with a kind of suppressed cheer. "Take a seat," he said, caressing the wedge of satin in the lapel of his Prince Albert, while a smile of overjoyed benignity spread across his rubicund, shaven, Brother Cheeryble countenance, "and let me unfold our policies. We are getting out an eighteen-volume Encyclopedia of Captains of Industry—a brilliant enterprise—you ought to net three thousand a year. Some do better. There's our Mr. Peckham, for instance. He is making forty-five hundred now."

Green though I was, I smelled rascality, but allowed the President to go on "unfolding his policies"—which were, to button-hole conceited merchants and manufacturers, obtain their biographies, and insert the same without cost. However, portraits would embellish the immortal work and be of inestimable value to posterity. Captains of industry were permitted to pay for the plates—one hundred and fifty dollars each. As for my part in the conspiracy, I was to write the lives of corset magnates and corn-cure kings, after first bamboozling them into submission. No question as to my fitness for the job. I was "the man in ten thousand to succeed at it," the great Shenstone assured me.

Doubtless! Captains of Industry think twice before kicking a "Reverend" downstairs.

I thanked Mr. Shenstone for his brotherly interest in my future, but said I thought that on the whole I would go back to picking pockets, as I liked it better because then I could rob widows and orphans. Still, if business ran dull in that line, I might reconsider and call again.

This was not by any means my last effort to find an opportunity of supporting myself at some secular occupation, and yet I had no intention of abandoning my purpose as a minister of Christ. I could continue it, even without a charge — teaching a Bible class, as I had been doing ever since early summer; lifting up my voice in prayer-meeting, too, and serving as a pillar of the Young People's Guild; and, meanwhile, writing — in other words, preaching with my pen.

I was bitterly unhappy, though. Perhaps most people are, in the very stage when, if they could look ahead, they would see that their hardships are — to use that well-worn phrase for lack of a better — only "blessings in disguise." How little I recognized that those days when I was "out" were doing for me what Byefield had failed to do, what Thorpe had failed to do, and what Sapphira had failed to do. At last — wonder of wonders! — I was being fitted for the ministry.

It was as if I had gone apart into a desert place, to meditate and pray. If I had blundered about, this way and that, hitherto, the wilderness befriended me, and taught me, and enabled me to see

clearly the truth I was to preach ever after. My gospel took shape. Misgivings vanished. Problems faded into insignificance. One day I even wrote out my creed, thus:

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ His Son, and in the Holy Spirit indwelling in the heart of man. I believe in the Sermon on the Mount. I believe in Salvation, and the Life Everlasting, beginning here, continuing in the world to come."

Higher criticism, evolution, abstruse speculations — they should never be so much as named in my sermons (granting that there were some day to be sermons again). That simple creed would suffice. I had no ambition to be called a "thinker" or a "scholar" or an "apostle to the intellect."

Probably the professors at Byefield would have howled at this, so vague was my creed, so oblivious of "truth," so frayed at the edges, so indifferent to "the consensus of opinion among the best German critics." They might even have called it a relapse into mysticism.

Well, what of it? As soon as you rebel against what the theological specialists call mysticism and set out to define each minutest detail of your creed, you've got something you can reject. As a shrewd philosopher once put it, "Ask of me less, and I will give you all." Moreover, you are like a bumpkin in a picture gallery with his nose against a painting. He sees a jumble of meaningless daubs — thrown together with impressionist ingenuity, to be sure, but not one of them tallying with reality as

he stupidly thinks he knows it. Let him stand back a few feet, look with his soul instead of his optic nerve merely, and lo, what a revelation! Truth? Yes, in the whole of it. He could study the details all his days and miss truth utterly. How the angels must laugh at that method! For the fool saith in his heart, "I am judging the picture," not aware that the picture is judging him.

The joke of it is, the "thinkers" easily forget their mania for "truth" in matters apart from theology. "All men are born free and equal," says the Declaration of Independence, and they swallow it gladly; whereas, they enjoyed a somewhat restricted freedom the day they were born, and differ notoriously among themselves as concerns beauty, bank-account, virtue, and the ability to see through a grindstone. Why, when it comes to reckoning with the unseen and to a considerable extent unknowable, must they insist on cross-questioning every littlest iota? The letter killeth, the spirit maketh alive.

Was it mysticism, my looking at the gospel in the large — not critically, not scientifically, not with a detective's dark lantern in one hand and a German dictionary in the other, but in the way Christians have looked at it, to the good of their souls, from the days of the first disciples, there in Galilee, to our own? If this be mysticism, let us make the most of it. For my part, I preferred to follow the track beaten by innumerable devoted feet, and risk an occasional slight inaccuracy along that track,

rather than to go adventuring on my own account or with the "new learning" for my guide.

But there was another thing happening, all this while. I shall not dwell upon it. Every father will understand, and only a father can. The long-awaited crisis came, and with it the supreme experience of life. From that hour dates my manhood. It was this, quite as much as "finding myself" doctrinally, that fitted me for the ministry.

And the ministry was waiting, with a work for me to do, little though I recked it.

One morning in the city, where Gertrude lay ill, with my baby son asleep in his basket beside her cot in the hospital, I walked down town to answer another of the advertisements of "Help Wanted: Male," and, when I had almost reached the place, heard a jolly voice cry out behind me, "Hello! Whoa there, Jim!"

I wheeled around, shouting, "Why, hello, Archer! How's Restorationism?"

"Rotten!" he said, laughing. "But I guess I'm beginning to get it out of my system. I'm not so sure about some things as I was at Durham — less of a donkey, I hope. Where are you bound for this morning?"

I told him.

"Rubbish!" he retorted. "According to the consensus of opinion among the best German critics — namely, me — you're bound for Port William. Fred Piper has cleared out on leave of absence to study at Göttingen, and his church wants a man to

142 CONFESSIONS OF A CLERGYMAN

take his place till he gets back. Fine town, splendid people — I've got relatives among 'em — and so tame they'll eat out of my hand. I'll fix it up for you, easy!"

When I returned to the hospital, I said to Gertrude, "I hate to contradict a perfect lady, but you're wrong about the little duffer's name. He isn't George Roland, he's Edward Archer, and, if he'll hush up those squalls half a second, I can prove it."

Which I did — to her unbounded delight.

IX

BORROWED BOOTS — AND NEDDIE

A LONG with such sentiments as “Shiver my timbers!” and “Cheerily, my lads, yo-ho!” goes that boast of an able seaman, “I didn’t come in by the cabin windows; I’ve been through the mill, ground and bolted.”

Well, so had I; and yet, as I entered Port William when Gertrude’s convalescence had progressed to the point where she could travel, it felt decidedly like coming in by the cabin windows, for I escaped the ordeal of candidating. Ned Archer had “fixed it up” for me, and Port William “ate out of his hand,” just as predicted — nibbled first, then bit, then took hold in earnest.

What a charming place we saw when we peered out after a night of salt-sea slumber aboard the boat. “Look, Neddie!” said Gertrude. “Isn’t it grand?”

Neddie seemed a trifle bored, and went straightway to sleep again, after the manner of new infants, but grand it was, nevertheless. A background of wooded hills. A middle distance strewn with rows of old-fogy, barrack-like gray warehouses, and mansions in Colonial yellow-and-white with Greek-temple fronts. A foreground of red-brown rocks, wharves where coastwise crafts and jaunty,

schooner-rigged vessels lay tethered, and a harbor full of yachts housed over for the approaching winter. Away to the left, a huge, pink summer hotel. To the right, the coral-white minaret of a light-house. It made my heart leap up.

Especially when, from among the seven churches, I picked out mine by its portrait on a post-card I had seen. Really, you can't imagine a prettier old-fashioned meetinghouse, or a more graceful Christopher Wren tower, or a finer open-arched belfry, or a more perfect spire. At that distance, the whole thing might have been marble, topped off with a weathervane of pure gold.

With Neddie and Gertrude to look out for, not to mention the two nurses — one trained, the other training us — I rather neglected Port William during our carriage-ride from the waterfront to the Parsonage. No matter! A town like Port William could stand it, and some fairly vivid impressions crowded in despite that. I said to Gertrude, "It's as if Sapphira's best real-estate boomer had been given Thorpe to work with, enlarged it twenty diameters, thrown in Greek pillars by the hundred, painted it, varnished it, and cried, 'Well, now! Beat that if you can!'"

At the Parsonage, it was evident once more that we had come in by the cabin windows, for we were spared the throes of settling. In his flight to Göttingen, the Dear Departed had left the house furnished. Bravo! What we should have done otherwise, the Old Scratch and my banker alone know.

It was droll, popping into another fellow's abode

and another fellow's job, though at the same time a trifle saddening. The Dear Departed was expected home by July at latest, and then what? "Out" again? Who knew?

Still, we were in great luck while it lasted. We had a hundred and twenty-five dollars a month — riches! We had a quaint old mansion to be happy in, a town of nine thousand people to work in, and, as for our parishioners, they were the very salt of the earth. Seven or eight of them — lovely, cultivated women, with an air of unassuming "quality" — were there at the house to receive us when we arrived. A glow from the open fire-place in the living room greeted Neddie. Admirers hovered over him. He was a "treasure," a "love," a "darling," and all the rest of it. I wanted to discard my ministerial dignity, and dance a fandango for joy.

Now, when a clergyman comes into a new parish to stay, he is full of curiosity regarding his predecessor, for he begins where the other chap left off. A lot depends on the sort of minister the other chap was. And, while I was only a stop-gap, there in Port William, I felt a tingle of that same curiosity as I went about the house. Don't say I "rubbered." The Dear Departed had written his personality all over it. On the chimney-piece in his study, behold, the Dear Departed's tobacco-jar. Beside it, the Dear Departed's playing-cards. On a top shelf in the pantry, a bottle — of which the less said, the better. And, at the bottom of a waste-basket that had been carelessly emptied, a scrap of

red paste-board. Rather than draw conclusions without warrant, I fished it out. Sure enough, a theater-tag.

Gertrude says I whistled. She even pretends that I whistled a tune, to the effect that "I Didn't Care" if the Dear Departed "Never Came Back."

Seriously, however, I was not shocked especially, I was puzzled. For I took it that the Dear Departed was a rather familiar type, liberal in his principles, fearless in applying them, and risking a few minor improprieties so as to get closer to the men of his congregation and prove that Christian ideals were not incompatible with "a stein on the table and a good song ringing clear." Puzzle: Find the preacher of my stamp who can get around gracefully in that stamp's boots.

They were popular boots, undeniably. The Dear Departed had succeeded in Port William, whereas I had failed in Thorpe and failed again in Sapphira. Was he successful because of his peccadilloes, or in spite of them? In spite of them, Gertrude thought. As for myself, I began to wonder if I should not lose ground by being too Puritanical.

In Thorpe, Puritanism was all the rage. It fitted the Code. It was the right thing in Sapphira, too; the smallest concession to worldliness classed you with the pagans. But how was it in Port William? I wished I could open my Bible and read a few Commandments such as, "Thou shalt not smoke," "Thou shalt not dance," or "Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven jack-

pot," with perhaps a Beatitude to declare, "Blessed are the teetotalers," and another announcing, "Blessed are all they that stay home from the theater, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." But I knew of only one text that pertained, namely, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no meat while the world standeth."

Excellent! And yet it remained to determine what brother was to be looked out for and what meat would make him to offend. Evidently the Dear Departed had said, "The jovial, broad-minded, easy-going fellow is my brother, and nothing makes him to offend quicker than a straight-laced asceticism."

I should have been considerably less uneasy, I suppose, had not a certain Y. M. C. A. achieved fame shortly before by raising the question, "Is bowling a Christian game?" When that happened, it looked as if we were getting back to the grand old days when the scribes and Pharisees discussed whether an egg laid on the Sabbath could be eaten without sin on the morning after!

Looking over the arguments generally advanced for Puritanism, I could see that there were two that bobbed up oftenest. We should "be careful of our influence." We should remember "what such things lead to."

Influence! What if our extreme avoidance of "the very appearance of evil" made us prigs in the eyes of our fellows? Does anybody value the influence of prigs? And, if influence is the point, how are you going to answer the man who retorts,

"If people are so dead set on copying after me, why don't they do as I do? I discriminate."

When it comes to the bugbear of "what these things lead to," it is equally difficult to make out a clear case. God hates a dude, but must we give up clothes on that account? God hates a religious crank, but does that forbid church-going?

Sometimes, too, you will hear that many things innocent in themselves are harmful "because of their associations." In the institutional church where I was engaged in social work for a time during the year of my truancy from Byefield, they opened a class in Delsarte for young girls. All went beautifully, till it leaked out that actresses studied Delsarte. Then the whole class bolted. Oh, clever! By the same logic, you might have told them that, as people have been known to drink beer out of water glasses, Christianity pure and undefiled prescribed tubs.

And the funnier side of all this is that quite commonly the same church-members who nearly die of the shock if a minister lights a cigar, or uses wine in extreme moderation, or allows himself to dance the "Virginia Reel" with the youngsters, or plays solitaire, or goes to see Sothorn in "The Merchant of Venice," will do precisely those things themselves without blinking. As regards the theater, there are even people who abhor a minister if he ever goes and abhor him if he never goes. It is as if they were saying, "Stand up, so we can knock you down again!"

Personally, I dislike being knocked down, and

personally I am tired of the old plea, "How do you expect the theater to reform when the best people stay away?" In the first place, the best people don't always stay away. In the next place, they get fooled — part of the time, at least — trapped into seeing what they supposed would be decent and isn't. When this happens what do they do? Sit it out meekly; whereas, if any one of them had the spunk to hiss, five hundred others would join in. On those terms, the best people would count for something in their little enterprise of reforming the stage. On the present terms, hardly!

And I confess to being "all fed up," as the English say, with the argument that ministerial indulgence in questionable amusements shows a fine, manly, courageous independence. The independence I don't doubt. But I can't call it fine. It strikes me as just a bit vulgar. Nor can I call it manly. Manliness involves chivalry and a regard for other folks' feelings, even when they turn out to be stupid folks, or prejudiced, or pathetically youthful. Especially, I refuse to call it courageous, unless it is courageous to bite one's own nose off. Most observers would call that silly.

All in all, it struck me that if I went in for the gay and sporty the fun would be not worth the candle. I might contrive in that way to "stand in" with the men of my congregation and with quite a few others, possibly, but should I get hold of them on their noblest side? Would they respect me? Would they not be shrewd enough to see through the trick, and, while calling me a "roaring

good duck " and all that, put me down as a "light-weight" and not a particularly admirable one, either? When I had been a Bohemian all the week, how could I ask them to take it seriously when I appeared as a robed prophet on the Sabbath?

And what, meanwhile, of the old folks, the young folks, the women folks. I should be grieving some, shocking others. I should even be setting an example very hurtful to half-grown boys and girls too immature to "discriminate" and with characters so unformed that it was as yet impossible for them to know whether they could trust themselves to be "moderate." I should end by defeating the very purpose that was dearest to my heart.

I believe in "getting next," and then again I don't. The preachers who have shaken the world never tried to "get next." Their contemporaries knew them as "set apart"—wearing a strange garb, perhaps, living a life of which little was open to common scrutiny, and haloed round with awesome, romantic mystery. How much can you find out about Peter the Hermit, say, or Bernard of Clairvaux, or the Apostle Paul? Hardly anything. This was one source of their power.

And our present-day cheek-by-jowlism is one of the things that ail us. Although gravely "set apart" by ordination, and bearing a peculiar title, we are "men among men" despite that, and not always in the best sense. The world looks in at our Parsonage windows. It spies on our wives, our children, our servants. Familiarity breeds—oh, not contempt or anything like it, yet a thing that

would have settled Peter the Hermit's sacred hash in no time. Why must we increase the handicap by exhibiting our peccadilloes on purpose and even cultivating peccadilloes to exhibit? I rather guessed I wouldn't.

This, you see, was coming out flat-footed on Puritan soil, and I suspect it sounds as if I had cleared the matter up in the space of six minutes. It took a day and a half, however, and what cleared it up finally was opening the door of a closet in the ante-room at the church and catching sight of the Dear Departed's Genevan gown. "Great Cæsar!" I exclaimed. "If I'm expected to preach in *that*, I guess I can't afford to be frisky on week days."

How foolish the Dear Departed had been! Trying to eat his cake and have it, too! What egregious bad taste he had shown! Moreover, how radically he had misunderstood human nature! People don't want religion made easy. They want it made hard. According to all I had heard, the highly popular Dear Departed had not brought outsiders into the church, whereas almost any evangelist could come along with a gospel of austere self-denial and haul in outsiders hand over fist.

Still, I was not for preaching Puritanism from my pulpit, for I knew what could come of that. Crude and undiscerning Christians would imagine that when they had abstained from a few rather trifling frivolities, they had attained something dangerously like perfection. Instead of urging these definite, clean-cut sacrifices, I would preach the fundamentals that, according to the individual con-

science, might or might not require them. I had no ambition to champion a Code. I had seen Thorpe's.

In a way, this resolve of mine to walk the traditional chalked line, when I was not a very stern or bigoted Puritan at heart, might be described as a kind of hypocrisy the other end to. What of it? It was compromise, and life is made up of compromises. Take it or leave it, the fact remains. If I compromised then, it was from a decent motive. Nominally at least, there were immortal souls in my keeping, and I acted on the old precept, "Better be safe than sorry."

But you remember my saying that while I didn't believe in "getting next," I nevertheless did believe in it. I wanted Port William to like me and trust me and open its heart to me. I wanted to call out the very best there was in it. I wanted the sweet, tender, confiding devotion every pastor wants and has to have or fail. As I trudged home from the church, late that afternoon, I wondered how I was to gain it, for I had not counted on Neddie Boy.

It was about five o'clock when I reached the Parsonage—to find Neddie Boy riding up and down the living-room in the arms of the distinguished Charles M. Whitlock—"author-journalist," according to his account of himself in "Who's Who," and Port William's leading celebrity. No "mixer" was the immortal Charles. People called him a "recluse." He was renowned for "cracked ice." You "couldn't touch him with a ten-foot pole."

And yet here he was, prancing to and fro with Neddle, and making of himself as delightfully outlandish a wild idiot as you will meet in your world-wide travels. And his wife was another. More so, if anything.

They went all to smash over Neddle — quizzed Gertrude about his appetite, and how “long” he was, and the hour of his bath, and the number of ounces he had gained — oh, everything! And you can guess what came next, of course — voluble outpourings about Charles M. Whitlock, Jr., then a downy-headed cherub of eight months, “but he wore year-old moccasins” and was “way ahead of Dr. Holt’s specifications for a rascal of his age,” and “wait till you hear his class yell.”

What followed would have surprised me less if it had been Mrs. Whitlock talking instead of her husband. He still walked up and down the room, carrying Neddle, but the spring went out of his step, and there was a note of perfectly undisguised sorrow in his voice. He need hardly have told us why. We knew already. “There was another,” he said. “She would have been three years old to-morrow.” The tears came — poor fellow, he couldn’t help it. And next moment things were dim before my eyes, and Whitlock grasped my hand with a pressure I had never felt in Thorpe or in Sapphira — yes, the “icy,” “solitary” Whitlock “no one could touch with a ten-foot pole.” I couldn’t speak, nor could Gertrude. We had been through too much, and too recently. But I saw

that Mrs. Whitlock had buried her head on Gertrude's shoulder.

Don't tell me I might have "got hold" of Charles M. Whitlock as easily by smoking and card-playing, "with a stein on the table and a good song ringing clear." It is superficial, all that. This ran deep. It was the beginning of a life-long friendship.

And plenty of other friendships began the same way. In Neddie I had a passport everywhere. Moreover, he acted as a standing invitation. Port William was in and out of the house all day to do him homage. While he brought me close to my people, enabling me "to sit down on their very hobs," he was equally good at enabling them to sit down on mine. Because of Neddie, I had a new and passionate interest in children; they caught on, and crawled all over me, and the effect on their parents was — well, decidedly better than "steins on tables" or "good songs ringing clear." I was a great man in Port William — no "thinker," to be sure, and no "apostle to the intellect," but Neddie's father and in a fair way to become an "apostle to the heart." Though nobody called me "old fellow" or slapped me on the back or asked me to jollify at stag-parties, people poured out their souls to me because they believed I would understand. It was Neddie's doing, all of it.

Before Spring he had that parish right by the hair — literally — and one day I suggested that we revise the gold-lettered black sign-board on our meetinghouse so that it would read,

“ Calvary Church

“ Rev. Dear Departed, Minister,

“ Rev. Me, Temporary Stop-Gap,

“ Peter McCosh, Sexton,

“ Neddie Boy, the Whole Thing.”

X

"THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS"

JOKES have their mission. Sometimes they are only the grotesque shadows coming events cast before them. Taking a thing humorously means at least taking it; by and by, you may take it seriously.

No sooner had I joked about revising the sign-board outside the church than I felt—oh! not a distinct, sharp-edged desire to put my own name there and have it stay, for that would have been too rough on the Dear Departed, but a determination to act as if my name were there already, and Neddie Boy's too. I would be more than a stop-gap. I would take root. As long as I remained, I would dismiss the thought of leaving. Right up to the last day of my engagement, I would be pastor in earnest.

Does this sound a trifle like a polite version of "I Don't Care if You Never Come Back"? Perhaps. Does it seem to imply that, underneath my sense of being bound in honor and in principle not to oust the Dear Departed, lay a suspicion that I should be doing God service if I accomplished just that? Perhaps. And yet the suspicion had never taken form in my mind, though I could not avoid asking myself why any man in his senses should be

willing to run away from a parish like Port William, and why, if he simply couldn't help it, he should go to Germany, of all places. What was the attraction? "Truth"? The "consensus of opinion among the best German critics"? Possibly. And then again, possibly beer.

I am taking the lid off my soul, you see. If there was rascality there, make the most of it. Jeer, if you like. But give me credit for being loyal to the Dear Departed in every outward act. Even his tobacco-jar kept its place on the chimney-piece in his study, as putting it away might have appeared a criticism of his standards. When people spoke of him kindly, I took pains to draw them out. When they spoke of him unkindly (some did) I changed the subject — not brusquely, as if it were a sore point, and yet quickly, and in as natural an offhand way as I could manage. I never defended him. That would have been assuming he needed it. I believe Port William gave me credit for doing him full justice, and not at all in the style of the Scotch dominie who, while pickling a stick for Sandy McGreggor, said, "Hoots! I'll be faithful with him!" My people remember; ask them if I so much as lifted a left finger to disinherit the Dear Departed.

I have gone into this at some length because it leads up to a "scene"; for, if things could "happen" in Sapphira, they could also happen in Port William — pretty surprisingly, too. One morning about seven weeks after our arrival, Dr. Harriman Stone hopped out of his buggy at the Parsonage gate, as I was starting off to mail a letter, and said,

"Can't you wait a moment? We've elected you by a unanimous vote, and I hope you'll accept, for everybody wants you."

I thought he must be crazy, and I guess he knew it, he laughed so.

It was all true, however. The Dear Departed had been given a "chair" of something or other at Byefield—"Moabite Semicolonology," Gertrude says. On his return from Göttingen, he was to sit down in that chair (after signing the ancient creed and then tearing it to tatters in his Inaugural Address) and there he was to stay, to the great profit of theologues, the "new learning," and his tobacconist. He had written, resigning his parish. With a delicacy beyond praise, Port William had left me entirely in the dark about it until my election had been put through.

Happy? I walked on pink clouds. I was in a seventh heaven of delight and gratitude and inspiration. When Dr. Stone got into his carriage and drove off, I rushed into the house, shouting, "Neddie! Neddie Boy! You've got us a call."

It was then that I committed my first and last crime against the Dear Departed's memory. His tobacco-jar retired to the attic.

I accepted the call, of course, and realized that I had come into an ideal parish, and if anything troubled me it was that. Especially in his youth, a man likes to feel that he is moving ahead in a straight line. He likes to think that no experience is being wasted, but that whatever has entered into him adds to his resources in some visible way

and can be put to work. Here, it was not so. That struggle in Thorpe counted for nothing. The struggle in Sapphira counted for even less, except as it fitted me to recall it with a blush. Looking further back, my knowledge of the rescue mission and the Christian Crusaders seemed a fruitless thing, mostly. I could not apply it. There were Salvationists in Port William. The evangelization of “lumpers” and coastwise seamen and the rough fisher-folk was their field, not mine. In retrospect, my career thus far seemed a good deal like that of the rolling stone that gathers no moss.

Probably every young minister has these squirms of self-dissatisfaction at times, unreasonable though they are, and in my case they were particularly unreasonable, for I had already begun to gather up old threads — bright, beautiful, almost golden threads spun for me during a tour of the English cathedrals that summer I ran away from Byefield. If I had renounced the idea of being an “apostle to the intellect” and sought instead to become an “apostle to the heart,” there was an element I must not neglect — “the beauty of holiness.” Who knew but that this was to be my “distinctive mission” in Port William?

I had felt this, vaguely, when I first opened the closet door in the ante-room at the church and caught sight of the Genevan gown I was expected to wear in the pulpit. Along with other thoughts (about the Dear Departed, whose gown it had been) came a recollection of those strange, ill-rimed lines of Emerson’s:

"I like a church, I like a cowl,
I love a prophet of the soul,
But not for all his faith can see
Would I that cowlèd churchman be."

With all due respect to the Concord sage, I begged to differ. Nothing pleased me more than being a churchman, and if a "cowl" went with it, so much the better. I put on the gown with some trepidation the first Sunday, it is true; and yet, once on, it suited. It gave a fitting dignity to my office. It clothed me with authority. When I rose up to preach, I was not in the mood of a minister who remarks, concessively, "My dear friends (if I may take the liberty of so addressing you) I solicit your indulgence while I explain a few crotchets of mine regarding a hobby in which, privately, I take considerable interest, though aware that it would be bad manners to press the point or ask others to share my whims." Not a bit of it! With the edges of those silken folds brushing my wrists, I felt myself a historic type, ancient as Christendom, and echoing the old, old Gospel message that has come down through the ages from Jesus Himself.

I was unafraid. Self-consciousness had fled, and awkwardness with it. In a Genevan gown you can't be awkward if you try. It prevents. Its lines of dignity and grace are not only beautiful, they are solemn, reverential, worshipful, and suggestive of your mission and its holiness—in a word, they are churchly. How I had admired the

spirit of the English cathedrals! It was mine now, in a measure, because of the gown.

An enthusiasm returned that had been buried for several long years. For Byefield, when I got back to it, had not been churchly, it had been academic. And the meetinghouse at Thorpe — what a sacrilege against "the beauty of holiness"! While the choir shrieked off key to the accompaniment of a cabinet squeak-organ, in that gaunt, grim, rain-blotched interior, I looked out through windows of plain glass upon a row of horse-sheds embellished with circus-posters depicting female acrobats in tights.

In Sapphira it was not so bad, though the only pipe-organ in town belonged to Father Cronin's flock, and you had to walk circumspectly as you proceeded up the aisle at our church or trip in the rags under foot, and there was scarce a hymn-book but lacked one cover or both, while our windows, of patterned ground-glass, had lost a pane here and there, glass of a different pattern filling the gaps. And at times our furnace balked. Once it even smoked us out. All in all, the "beauty of holiness," as we knew it there, was an inner grace, devoid of outward symbols.

Oh, the relief, here in Port William, to have a churchly church at last, architecturally exquisite, outside and in — perfect, or close to that; with a stately gold-piped organ in the choir-loft at the rear; windows of stained glass; a high, old-fashioned pulpit reached by a winding mahogany-railed stairway; and, above the pulpit, an ancient

sounding board. My gown, in such surroundings, only harmonized. There was nothing theatrical about it. It was in keeping with all the rest.

As I write, I can't help wondering if you sympathize, for I know that one reader in seven, perhaps one in three, will respond with a curl of the lip or even a sense of virtuous superiority, accusing me of "estheticism." Many a time, I have heard people say, "As for myself, I can worship God in a back-yard." In fact, I have heard preachers sneer at churchliness and seen them back up the sneer by preaching in black alpaca coats. Genuine religion, so they believed, needed no external graces. As well paint the lily, perfume the rose, or gild fine gold. "Estheticism," to them, was a popish folly we had outgrown centuries ago. If we reverted to it now, who should say but we might presently so far forget ourselves as to crown our steeple-tops with the cross of our crucified Saviour, instead of letting the Catholics have it? And I have heard them say they wanted to reach the plain man, who abhorred the artistic and ecclesiastical and felt a lot more at home in Odd Fellows' Hall. They were not afraid of vulgarizing religion. If people wanted it vulgarized, then vulgarized let it be.

Remember, please, that I was no long-haired "esthete"—oh, not by a long shot! Hadn't I stood outside the Rescue Mission, with the tomtom music from a dozen awful dives banging in my ears, while I was coaxing "the boys" to come in?

Hadn't I worked with the Crusaders, and had my picture in the "War-Whoop," or whatever they called the sheet, along with the "Gospel Six"? And hadn't I put up with "dinkiness" fairly patiently in Thorpe and again in Sapphira? If I was on the wrong track now, it was in refusing to make a virtue of vulgarity, and in attempting, from what seemed to me a reverent motive, to cultivate the opposite of vulgarity.

The more I looked at it, the more I was impressed with the failure of the opponents of "estheticism" to make out a clear case. If they preferred to do away with outward symbols, why did they kneel when they prayed in secret and bow their heads and close their eyes when they prayed in public? Why did they insist on sacred melodies for their hymns? And why, if they were so anxious to bring religion down to the plain man's standards, had they never translated the King James Bible into newspaperese? Besides, there was the question of dress. Even they had scruples. They preached in black alpacas, in shirtsleeves never.

As I had watched the effects of their influence, I had thought it on the whole rather unfortunate, for I noticed that the same people who "could worship God" among the ash-cans "in a back-yard" could also sing "Rock of Ages" for fun at a picnic between mouthfuls of deviled ham and hard-boiled egg.

I am not saying that this was a situation to get angry over, or even to mope about. They meant

no harm. And yet were they not a little coarsened, a little dulled, a little lacking in spiritual perception?

Again, the opponents of "estheticism" seemed persuaded that they were perpetuating the traditions of the Pilgrim fathers, who built bare, stern, undecorated meetinghouses and stripped away the liturgy as a relic of Romish superstition. Yes, but see the music the Pilgrim Fathers had — violins, 'cellos, bass-violos and the rest — and see what their ministers wore in the pulpit! Not Genevan gowns only, but "bands."

And it is a mistake to imagine that the external dignities of Christian worship originated in popery. They originated among the very Christians to whom Saint Paul and the Beloved Disciple addressed their epistles. Apart from the writings of such leaders as Irenæus and his fellows, the clearest record we have of Early Christian spirituality is its art. Nor was it wholly an illustrative art, either. It was symbolic. It sanctified emblems, and used them to good purpose.

Now, I should hate to have you infer that I was planning a "high church" movement in Port William. The cathedrals had not turned my head. From the Episcopal point of view, I was not even "low church," I was somewhere down cellar. All I wanted was to remove from the service whatever remained of a slight and wholly unintended irreverence, to make the most of its worshipful side, and, without altering it radically at any point, to breathe into it a spirit of consistent, unaffected,

simple-hearted devoutness. "Estheticism"? No, there is another and a better word for it—the word "piety."

For the sake of the story, one might wish that Port William had got right up on its haunches and talked back to me with some dander, but the truth is, it "ate out of my hand," as the Rev. Edward B. Archer would have said. When I suggested that the chatter before service and the "visiting" from pew to pew were not quite seemly and perhaps interfered a little with the mood people ought to seek, a word ended it. My parishioners expressed astonishment that nobody had ever spoken out about that before. And I got the same ready response when I asked for printed "notices," as I thought it incongruous and a shade ungodly to pause in the midst of a religious service to proclaim a "chicken supper, twenty-five cents." No one opposed me. No one wanted to. All along, it was the easiest job ever I had.

Even my choir fell in line. Wonderful! For you know how a young minister gets warned by the veterans; instead of "Bevare of vidows, Sammy," it is "Bevare of choirs, Sammy! There's more dynamite in the choir-loft than anywhere else in the meetinghouse." And perhaps you remember the touching parody:

"'Shoot, if you will, this old, gray head,
But spare my solo, sir!' she said."

Happily, I was blessed with that exceedingly rare

felicity, a Christian choir. Although some grains of Rocky Mountain humor had come East with me, I was never tempted to paraphrase the placard supposed to be one of the "sights" at the Bucket of Blood saloon, "Don't shoot the piano-player, he is doing the best he can." Our choir did their best, to be sure — especially Miss Aldrich, the soprano soloist — but it was a highly acceptable best because so reverent. I have heard finer voices than hers, many a time, and voices more successfully trained, yet I have never heard a girl sing with a more appealing devoutness. She was preaching from her end of the church as earnestly as I was preaching from mine. When shall I forget the solemn thrill in every word, the first Easter, when she sang:

"He died that we might live
He lives that none may die;
Henceforth, the open grave
Points to the open sky."

Directly following my sermon, it was a kind of peroration. I had not expected it. I was so moved that when I rose to pronounce the benediction, there was a lump in my throat.

But I had observed that this perfect accord between the vocal numbers and the sermon-topic was rare indeed. In fact, "breaks" were possible. I might preach in a joyous mood only to have the effect spoiled almost to the point of absurdity by a somewhat tearful solo. Worse than that, it was recorded that, one blazing July Sunday when the

Dear Departed had exchanged with the portly Dr. Hart, who dripped with perspiration — visibly — the voice from the choir-loft topped off the effect by singing "As Pants the Hart for Cooling Streams."

I was a fool not to reach an understanding with my choir a great deal sooner than I did, for there was no dynamite to be afraid of and I ought to have known it. Still, there was "temperament," I supposed, and I could afford to bide my time and be politic, as we had settled down to stay. How long we were to stay, however, neither Gertrude nor I foresaw. It seemed a bit strange, after my brief pastorates in Thorpe and Sapphira, to be saving up to furnish the Parsonage, what day the Dear Departed should return and carry off his belongings, tobacco-jar and all, though economies were familiar enough. Still, when the trained nurse ended her fortnight's engagement, it was a joy to discover that, for an extra dollar a week, the untrained nurse we had brought with us would deign to assist in housework also. Splendid! The "shebang" was in running order. It could run on indefinitely, so far as we saw, and as a matter of historic fact, it ran nine years. Frances was born there, and, later on, Lydia.

Well, if I was a fool to be afraid of my choir, I at least gained something by waiting till that lovely Easter Sunday. After a service like that, where the choir had accidentally taken the words out of my mouth, singing my peroration for me and giving it a glorified beauty, I could go to them and suggest that this splendid harmony of sermon and

music might be arranged for as a regular thing. They saw the point instantly. The very "temperament" I had feared, fought on my side — or rather, there wasn't any fight or anything even faintly resembling a fight. From that day forward, I and my choir planned the services together. I gave them the theme, they selected the music. Sometimes — actually! — it was the other way about. If Miss Aldrich had found something she especially wanted to sing, I would draw my theme from that. And if this sounds like a rather unwarranted concession, was it so very different from taking one's text from an ancient Jewish hymn-book — namely, the Psalms?

We used the Psalms — or as we preferred to say, the Psalter — for responsive readings in church, and here was another opportunity to stand out for "the beauty of holiness." We used the Psalms entire.

I know you will gasp when I declare that I objected to using them entire. They are part of the Bible. How dares a man find fault with them? Isn't it blasphemy? To be entirely frank, I don't blame you for taking that view, but let me see if I can't persuade you that mine was blameless, also. I think you would be shocked if some clergyman should read from his pulpit "The Song of Songs, Which Is Solomon's." Yet that is a part of the Bible. If we consent to pass over "The Song of Songs," leaving the whole of it unused because it would be folly to use it (and in these latter days,

wrong), why is it a sin to leave portions of the Psalms unused?

Problem: To take an ancient Jewish hymn-book, and fit it to spiritual needs of a Christian and very modern congregation.

Because it is Jewish, the Psalter contains here and there an example of Oriental imagery that mars “the beauty of holiness” as we moderns understand it—anatomical imagery, I mean; passages in which the Psalmist’s bones, and reins, and what not, are to praise the Lord. Logically, of course, it is no more grotesque to praise the Lord with one’s other viscera than to praise the Lord with one’s heart. But how different the effect on sentiment! How exceedingly queer and foreign and beautiless and unworshipful those passages! I wanted to leave them out, less from the esthetic motive than from the religious.

And because it is ancient, written centuries before Christ, the Psalter reflects now and then a spirit distinctly un-Christian. There are imprecatory Psalms, and Psalms that picture the Father in Heaven as a God of Battles, and Psalms in which the poet exults over his enemies, hating them, all but cursing them, and, with the eloquence of a flaming soul enraged, praying fervently for their destruction. This was good Judaism, doubtless, but we are not Jews, we are Christians, and when the unenlightened side of Judaism crops out in a Christian service—the very side of Judaism the Saviour combated so vigorously—it seems to us a spirit

out of all keeping with the Sermon on the Mount. We are not edified. We are bewildered a little, and ought to be scandalized. I wanted to drop out those passages.

In a word, I wanted freedom to treat the ancient Jewish hymn book as I was already treating our modern Christian hymn book. There were hymns I dropped out completely. Ever since the beginning of that awful cataclysm in Europe I have been unable to sing "The Son of God Goes Forth to War." It gives me the horrors. "His blood-red banner streams afar"—monstrous! And back in the days of my pastorate at Port William I omitted stanzas from hymns when I found them lacking in the devotional quality or blemished with some such unfortunate phrase as "the performing God." No one complained. So was it a mad project, really—this of mine to omit certain passages from the Psalter? What remained would be magnificent—at once noble and Christian—a glowing splendor.

Wonderfully original I thought my project, and so it was, except that others before me had been original, and in the same way. When I looked over the various compilations of responsive readings, I had no difficulty in choosing one that suited my purpose or in persuading my church to adopt it.

"Eating out of my hand" once more? Yes, and there were moments when I almost felt that their docility would allow me to go further and introduce written prayers. If I hesitated, and finally

gave up the idea, it was because my good angel intervened — meaning, of course, my wife.

I was awfully in earnest. While I could make of the short prayers a genuine appeal to the throne of grace, the long prayer remained a difficult intellectual performance and one beset with pitfalls unnumbered. Every minister will own up to very much the same embarrassment. Instead of praying, he finds himself "offering prayer" — that is, unless he keeps on the alert — and a prayer may even turn itself into a kind of lecture.

It is not praying to say, "O, Lord, remind us once more that honesty is the best policy," and then go on moralizing. It is not praying to say, "We thank Thee, our Heavenly Father, for Thy plan of Salvation, which is as follows." Sometimes you hear these make-believe prayers described as "little sermons to God," but they are only ostensibly that. When such expressions creep in as "Paradoxical though it may seem to Thee, oh Lord!" or, "We beseech Thy blessing upon the glorious temperance rally to be held in the Reform Building, 23-27 Tenth Street, next Tuesday evening at eight o'clock sharp," you can understand the country newspaper's celebrated boast, "At the International Sunday School Convention last week, Rev. Blake, of this village, made the most eloquent prayer ever addressed to the people of Chicago."

Frightful things can happen to prayers. They have even happened to German prayers. Once upon a time there was a falling out between the great

German critics, Ewald and Gesenius, over the Old Testament name for God. Ewald wrote it Yahweh, whereas Gesenius wrote it Jehovah. The following Sunday, Ewald began his prayer, "Oh, Thou almighty and ever-gracious Yahweh, whom that consummate ass Gesenius calls Jehovah!"—a flight which the German papers might have described as "the most eloquent prayer ever addressed to Herr Doktor Gesenius already yet."

Now, while I was not tempted to slug Unitarianism or even Byefield in my prayers, or to give out notices of rallies, or to explain to my Maker His plan of Salvation, "paradoxical though it might seem to Omniscience," I was troubled enough without that—in danger of rambling, in danger of repeating myself, in danger of leaving out things. True, the prayers came straight from my heart. Instead of "offering prayer" I prayed. But I lacked the gift of so praying that I could gather up the petitions of a multitude, make them mine, and become a mouthpiece for my people as well as for my own innermost soul.

So far as I understood myself, I was stricken with the same inadequacy as when I attempted to preach without notes. If I could have written my prayers, albeit in mere outline, and used the manuscript or the memoranda, or—a better arrangement, perhaps—employed the memoriter method, I might have remedied at least the more serious of my shortcomings. But then, if I was to rely on written helps, why not adopt the beautiful and profoundly devotional liturgy that has come down to

us from God's saints of old? Generation after generation had found them an expression of the heart's tenderest and noblest and most reverent aspirations.

Would this be sacrificing spontaneity? Yes, and no. It would be sacrificing spontaneity of diction, but what of that? Were my offhand words so priceless? And yet, in the broader sense, it would not be sacrificing spontaneity in the least, for, in the broader sense, spontaneity was not there. In my consciousness that my prayer must body forth the spiritual yearnings of a congregation, I kept asking, "What am I forgetting to say? Am I repeating myself? Is the prayer getting too long? Have I gone the whole range of it too rapidly, so that it will be too short?" Questions such as those limited spontaneity. Sometimes they killed it.

I don't know that I have solved the problem for others, but I am sure that I have solved it for myself. I began then, and have continued ever since, a study of the Episcopal Prayer Book, trying to assimilate its beauty, absorb its reverent phrasing, fathom its deeps of religious fervor. Although I pray my own prayers, back of them is the spirit of that wonderful book, just as the New Testament is back of my sermons. God forgive me if I speak less humbly than I ought, but I am giving myself credit for sincere and devoutly-meant efforts rather than for achievements.

At the same time, I sought to banish the intellectual toilsomeness that fetters the free movement of the soul toward God. As the long prayer was difficult, I divided it into five short prayers, thus:

A prayer of praise,
A prayer of thanksgiving,
A prayer of confession,
A prayer for moral and spiritual graces,
A prayer for those in special need.

And then, after these five, came the prayer in which 'all joined—that prayer of prayers beginning "Our Father."

In this way I gained what I had never had before—spontaneity and a freedom from self-consciousness. I was not choosing my words, they came unbidden. I was not composing and arranging. I was praying without effort and from a full heart. After the service I had a sensation, rare among ministers, of having been to church.

Thus far, my efforts toward making our worship a godlier thing had been of a sort little calculated to arouse opposition, but when I determined to assail that gone-to-seed specter, the prayer-meeting, I shuddered, although it is not by any means so ancient an institution as some think; Christianity got on without prayer-meetings for a matter of about eighteen centuries. Nor is it a particularly deep-rooted institution; in Thorpe, my parishioners suggested that we change from Friday night to Thursday night, which would be nearer the middle of the week and fully as convenient, but we had to change back, for nobody felt called upon to seek the Lord in prayer except at the accustomed time. Finally, the prayer-meeting is not "the thermometer of the church"; I had a fine, live, vigorous church, and a perfect calamity of a prayer-meeting.

Thorpe did better; in Thorpe, a prayer-meeting was an event. Sapphira did infinitely better; the few Christians out there keenly enjoyed getting together for mutual encouragement in the face of almost universal paganism. But in Port William we had a prayer-meeting of a type you may have heard about, sometime or other, and perhaps seen. As I sketch the type, ask yourself if you recognize it:

A midweek evening. Bells slowly tolling. Here and there, women starting out, singly or by twos and threes, their faces expressive of a sweet, patient, sacrificial dutifulness. For every seven women, a man — generally a meekish-looking man, or if not that, possessed of a Lincoln-like firmness.

In forty homes, meanwhile, a troubled air, as if the bells recalled privileges neglected. Then, a distant sound of treble voices, singing, with possibly a baritone audible above them. At this, a quite perceptible change in the stay-at-homes. Now that it is too late to go, they feel less guilty.

At the church, a brightly-lighted room — too large, usually, with only the rear seats occupied, except as two or three devoted spirits have stationed themselves well forward, intending to turn around when they rise to "take part." On the platform, the pastor — not bored, exactly, but obviously apprehensive. The volunteer organist, however, seems afflicted, somewhat, as if coaxed into it against the grain. And you detect an atmosphere of — no, not dread, though, were it twice as pronounced, it would be that.

As the service proceeds, it appears to be post-

poning something. There is a great deal of singing, a long pastoral prayer, the reading of an entire chapter from the Bible, and a purposely stretched-out address, with a view to deferring the moment of "throwing the meeting open." No wonder! When that arrives, the same few martyrish amateur priests and priestesses who have done this thing from a sense of grim duty for years and years will contribute "remarks" or lead in prayer. The remarks will be echoes of sermons they heard in their youth—and, alas! so will the prayers. And oh, the heart-rending pauses in between! How drearily the minister will implore the brethren to "improve the time." How furtively a wife, here and there, will nudge a husband by way of rousing him to action! Up to the end there prevails a terror lest the service come to a scandalous, because premature, dead stop.

When the suspense is over, is there not a ring of grateful relief in the closing hymn, "Lord, Dismiss Us With Thy Blessing"?

When I think of the stay-at-homes, it strikes me as curious that they should have felt so wicked—indeed, that they should not have chidden the faithful for going. I recall a cartoon in *Punch* where a waiter was saying, "What will you have to-day, sir?" and the guest replying, "Oh! I suppose I'll have one of your ghastly dinners." If he knew the restaurant as well as all that, why had he come?

Perhaps my account of the kind of prayer-meeting we had in Port William sounds testy—or at least censorious—yet I am not in that mood at

present, nor was I in that mood at the time. A large attendance was out of the question — people had too many other interests. Better speaking was also out of the question — it takes training to make priests and priestesses who can preach and pray aloud "unto edification"—or, if not training, it takes a rare personal endowment. And I realized that those awful, awful pauses might be traced to something entirely natural and perhaps even admirable. Instead of indicating a decline, spiritually, the decay of the old-fashioned prayer-meeting might even indicate progress, spiritually.

A hundred years ago, when ministers preached three interminable sermons a Sunday, they had to extemporize; standards dropped, and kept on dropping till the offhand discourses of almost anybody seemed good for the soul. If the prayer-meeting no longer attracts, it is perhaps because people get vastly more from the pulpit, so that prayer-meetings suffer by comparison.

Besides, people have grown in sensitiveness and delicacy, and with sensitiveness and delicacy goes a shyness that hesitates to talk piety in public. To many a consecrated layman, taking part in meeting seems almost to resemble a kind of moral and spiritual disrobing act.

I think, too, that the dread of hypocrisy has increased since the old days. "Who am I," says the modern layman, "that I should tell others how to live?"

I am not insisting that the modern layman is entirely right in his attitude. He is too finnick, it

may be, and too squeamish. Settle that for yourself. My point is simply that you gain little by urging and wheedling, and that, if you should abolish a dead-and-alive prayer-meeting outright (granting, meanwhile, that there are splendid ones) you would not be committing the sin against the Holy Ghost.

Secretly, I nursed a lurking desire to abolish that prayer-meeting of ours in Port William. As a preliminary to heroic measures, I felt its pulse, one night — distributed pencils and slips of paper, and asked everybody to write out — anonymously and in “printing,” so that no one would be giving himself away — his reasons for coming. Then I collected the slips and read them aloud:

“Habit.”

“To see my friends.”

“Duty.”

“To please my mother.”

“Lonely. Nowhere else to go.”

“Ashamed to give it up.”

“Enjoy singing.”

“For the influence on others.”

And so it went — not bad answers, any of them, and yet beside the point, uniformly, if you expected an admission that the prayer-meeting was a force in my people’s lives, bringing them nearer to Christ and inspiring them with a stronger, keener zest for Christian service.

They were astonished, I think, that the answers should have turned out as they did, but if they were shocked, they were also amused, and in a mood

to talk the case over pretty frankly. This was what came of it:

We transformed the prayer-meeting into a religious forum. Each week, I would announce a topic for the next week, and give everybody a question to look up — or to think through — a question about the passage I had chosen for our study, or about the history back of the passage, or about its interpretation in the light of other passages, or, oftener than not, about its bearing on Christian living. That sent my people to their Bibles straight or looking into their own hearts or comparing notes with one another. It ended the old perfunctory echoing of dead sermons, the old listlessness, the old waiting for nudges and exhortations. Every one came prepared with something to say, and said it, not from duty, but because it was fresh and live and aglow with the interest of a discovery. I suppose that when the church at Corinth — or at Ephesus, say — had received a new Epistle from the Apostle Paul, they got together in precisely this mood to talk it over. How I wished I had conceived the plan before and got Thorpe and Sapphira to go in for it!

It involved no radical change in the service. We had the same hymns, the same pastoral prayers, the same Scripture reading as before; and I gave a short "address," for I always selected one of the questions to answer myself. If laymen chose to lead in prayer, they could and did. But what a changed spirit! Instead of groaning inwardly and wishing the thing over, we relished every moment

of it, and presently our numbers increased. This continued. The once-in-a-whilers became regular attendants. People who had shunned the old-fashioned institution came and saw our regenerated prayer-meeting, and liked it, and came again. Better yet, outsiders came. It was glorious. And if there is beauty in the health and strength and efficiency of enthusiasm, and holiness in the spirit of first-hand dealing with the problems of personal piety, we had it there.

Now do you taunt me with "estheticism"? I hardly suspect it. Surely you would have judged the tree by its fruits. You would have observed a new heartiness in our congregational singing, had you looked in on us at church. You would have got a welcome such as the stranger within our gates had never been wont to receive. You would have observed a novel and very gratifying dearth of empty pews. And when Communion came, you would have seen a whole row of dear people stand up to confess their faith in the Lord Jesus.

Estheticism! Say rather that it was Christian militancy. The church had become a recruiting-station for soldiers of the Cross.

XI

HOW I FED MY BRAIN

“WHAT shall I preach about?” asks the curate in the classic anecdote, and his bishop answers, “About twenty minutes.”

Wise bishop! A reincarnated Hooker would notice quite a change since the day he preached the sand through his hour-glass and was besought by his parishioners to turn it over for a fresh start. The “three-decker” sermon is not less defunct than the “three-decker” novel. And, speaking of novels, my friend Mr. Kenneth Brown has a theory that a best-seller should measure barely fifty thousand words.

But I doubt if a novelist would contract to turn out three best-sellers a year, even on those terms, and a twenty-minute curate, writing one sermon each week, is going it at pretty nearly that rate.

Under much more exacting conditions, too. There in Port William I addressed the same audience, year after year, whereas no novelist does, and it was not a custom-made audience, like the novelist’s, either. Besides, I had no one to weed out my failures, with thanks for “the privilege of examining them,” tears over the necessity of throwing them at my head, and assurances that rejection

"implied no lack of literary merit." I was my own editor. Worse yet, I had limited myself to a very restricted range of subjects. I had given bonds not to preach editorials, or book chapters, or *North American Review* articles, or funny stories, or disquisitions on what the Göttingen philosopher described as "the is-ness of the As-It-Were, the so-ness of the If." I had rashly taken it into my head to preach sermons.

A sermon, I believed, was an affair of the heart between me and my people. It had two objects. It must bring them face to face with God. It must bring them face to face with duty. And I was determined that it should stick to these two aims from beginning to end. I abhorred "fillers."

I had heard sermons that were at least half "filler," and I rather guess you have. Text, something or other in the Book of Judges. Exposition, ancient history by the yard. Conclusion, "Those Jews were a bad lot." I had heard sermons that were seven-eighths "filler." Boiled down, they came to this: "Dearly beloved, my little text holds true in biology, and in astronomy, and in cooking, and in navigation, and in arithmetic, and in trade, and in millinery, and in wall paper, and in politics, and, pardon my mentioning it, for I shall let you go after another two minutes, it also holds true in religion." I had even heard sermons that were "filler" and nothing but "filler" — sermons on "The Power of the Press," for instance, and things about "the last star of science."

Did any such sermons unveil the glory of the

risen Christ? Did any of them thrill the moral sense, so that people would go away strengthened with "the strength of ten, because their hearts were pure"?

You hear a lot about "the decay of modern preaching," but when modern preaching appears to have decayed it is not that that ails it. It has simply vanished. Another thing, not in any sense preaching, has taken its place. And if the other thing looks pretty rotten, what wonder?

There are smarter editorials in the papers than a minister can write. There are abler articles in the magazines. There are sociological lectures far surpassing his. And when it comes to philosophy, Herr Doktor Dumkopf at Göttingen can beat him to a frazzle at muddling "the is-ness of the As-It-Were, the so-ness of the If." Why is a minister so dead set on competing with star-performers in fields where he is an amateur bungler at best and perchance a donkey? There are moments when I almost feel like brightening the dull lexicon of modernity with a new and startling definition, thus:

PREACHER. One who preaches.

This is a dangerous definition, I know. It suggests "leanings toward Rome." Not long ago a gentleman of my acquaintance went the rounds of the churches in a large American city trying to find out where preaching occurred, instead of three-quarters secular lecturing as a substitute for preaching. He had great luck. He discovered nine such churches, which was doing well, as there

were only nine Catholic congregations in the city.

In Port William, I was not anxious to compete with the high-school instructors or with our eminent "author-journalist" or with the Lyceum "attractions" we imported. I wanted to compete with Fr. Cornelius Doherty, S. J.

This meant work. It was not the astounding volume of my "output" that appalled me, enormous though that was. What filled me with terror was realizing that I had resolved on mining what Sapphira would have called an exceedingly narrow "vein of pay ore." What if it should "peter"? What if, long, long before I was ready to leave Port William, I should awake some dreadful morning to find myself "preached out," or, in the Rocky Mountain vernacular, a case of "mine, miner, minus"?

Happily, preaching is not like mining, exactly. The mine has metes and bounds. No man can by taking thought add one nugget to its wealth. No man can raise "low-grade" ore to the estate of "high-grade" ore. Whereas, the scope and quality of a man's mind can be broadened and deepened and enriched by taking thought—that is, if he has the grit to back up the thought with work. I was a good deal in the same position as the author who observed, "Here's my problem: How to feed my brain while my brain feeds me?"

True, I was no longer a beginner, and, according to rule, should have been the owner of a "barrel." At a pinch, why not fall back on that? For two reasons. In the first place, old sermons are old,

and dead, and juiceless. Lacordaire hit it accurately when he called them "dried leaves." In the next place, mine were not suited to Port William. The lower, or Thorpeolithic, stratum was too boyish and, I may add, too "truly rural." The upper, or Sapphiralithic, stratum was too ridiculously encrusted with my miniature Lyman Abbottism. A further difficulty, I had burned the whole batch. Peace to their ashes!

So the case was serious. I must "feed my brain." And if you ever wanted to spy on a minister in his study, now is your chance.

At least, it is your chance to spy on one minister. Plenty of others have had different methods from mine — good methods, doubtless, for there are various paths to the goal, just as

"There are nine-and-sixty ways
Of constructing tribal lays,
And every single one of them is right."

Dr. Storrs read Law. Dr. Boynton "keeps a novel on his desk." Dr. Gordon is a student of Philosophy, Dr. Dawson a student of Literature. The Dear Departed, as I knew by the *Geschichtes* and *Achhimmelgewissenundhofbräuschafte* on his book-shelves, must have derived some pabulum from "the consensus of opinion among the best German critics."

For my own part, I had all the spiritual pretzels I needed at Byefield, nor was I gifted in Philosophy. It slid off my mind like water off a duck's back. Nothing remained but the lingo, and while

the lingo of philosophy was perhaps a luxury, up there in the pulpit, it was a bore and a grief down yonder in the pews. Pews expect a minister to "talk United States;" so I avoided Philosophy just as I avoided Speculative Theology and the Dear Departed's Achhimmelgewissenundhofbräuschafft.

Then what were the things I went in for? Bibles, to begin with. The King James Version, first. Then, because I knew whole chapters of that by heart and was in danger of running them over too hastily, the Bible of quaint old John Wiclif, and the Bible in French, and sometimes even the Bible in Italian. How the gospel story shone out through the strange, vivid, forceful wording! It seemed a revelation, all a-gleam with unspoiled freshness. I caught new shades of meaning, new glimpses of the Saviour, new flashes of moral inspiration. And if I neglected my Hebrew Bible and my Greek New Testament and the Bible in Luther's German, it was because Hebrew and Greek and German recalled Byefield and induced precisely the critical mood I was so anxious to keep clear of.

Perhaps it will surprise you, but I neglected those volumes of sermons you may pick up for a nickel apiece in the second-hand book-stalls. Poor reading they are, most of them — in fact, "dried leaves" and little more, stirring though they may have been in their day. The day is dead, and the preachers, too, and the saints who listened with open hearts. Beecher used to say, "The test of a good institution is that it digs its own grave" and

you can say the same of a good sermon. The better a sermon to-day, the clearer it is that the right place for it is to-morrow's waste-basket.

Exceptions? Doubtless. I read Phillips Brooks with a whole-souled, passionate delight. But then, Phillips Brooks was more than a preacher. He was the poet of his time, perhaps a poet of all time, and ranking with Tennyson, Browning and Wordsworth as a source of high leading. Over and over again I read those enchanting volumes. They were my teachers, almost as much as the Lives of Christ I read, and of these there were scores.

Then, too, I read "lives of the saints," as Gertrude termed them—such saints as Savonarola, Luther, Wiclif, Thomas à Kempis, Wesley, and a hundred more. Now and then, I fell to studying some glowing period of Church History, and there were times when I owed much to "the last star of science."

Here let me pause half a second to make myself clear. I was as scornful as ever of the science that masquerades as philosophy, denying God because it can't discover Him with a telescope. I had seen how cautious science was about facts—how it multiplied experiments, collected twice the necessary evidence, worked secretly lest some fellow looking on should say it was jumping at conclusions, and admitted only that "thus far, on the whole, the meager data appeared to suggest that possibly—tut, tut, not probably—this, that, or the other was maybe so." Oh, creepy! What a circus, then, to see these same timid souls snatch at

universal negatives so recklessly, and declare off-hand with a cock-sure, glib confidence, "There is no God, no soul, no Hereafter"! With all due respect, it was to snort.

I want to make it plain, moreover, that the science I prized was not the study of Nature in the general sense. If there are "sermons in stones" they can stay there. Nobody can keep awake listening to a stone. And when people assure you that Nature necessarily reveals God, tell them for me that they twaddle. There was Nature going to waste around Sapphira. Every prospect pleased — especially in the neighborhood of Indian Ridge, where the proprietor of the Jolly Dogs Hotel remarked to me, "Too bad you weren't here for the hanging. Prettiest hanging ever I seen. Hanged three. Reg'lar old-fashioned necktie-party." Fine revelations of God they had out there!

In the science I studied, I was not seeking sermons in stones, I was seeking them in the heart of man — through Psychology. Next to Phillips Brooks, my favorite modern author was Professor James, and, next to James, George Eliot. I wanted to understand character, and by character I mean the whole of it, not the fragment the so-called Realists exploit, as if only shame were real. I valued George Eliot's psychology because it was so compassionate, so generous, so human.

But a minister can starve his brain, even on the liberal square meals I gave mine, unless he gets out among his people.

You can caricature that if you like. You can

call it "drinking tea with old women." You can think of it as a kind of canvassing — pulling door-bells and asking "to see the lady of the house." You can say it is a survival of the sanctimonious days when a parson "prayed with the grown-ups and catechized kids." You can ridicule it as a "taffy-exchange." You can declare it a "comic supplement to preaching." But in that case, the joke is on you. For calling is the minister's best brain-food. Pope might have had that in mind when he wrote, "The proper study of mankind is man."

If I had been a failure, hitherto, it had been mainly because I had not known how to call. In Thorpe, I was a celebrity. When I called, people felt constrained to treat me as such, and like a fool I let them — to my own hurt and theirs. In Sapphira I went calling with the object of reenforcing my renown as a "hot Willie." You could guess where I was by the laughter. And, like as not, I should have gone on in that style, modifying it to suit Port William, had not a dimpled Professor of Pastoral Theology — Prof. Neddie, to be precise — taken me by the ear while it was yet day and pointed out the short cut to my people's hearts.

I am not implying that every household in Port William afforded an infant to teethe on my sacred watch-chain. My point is simply that it got talked around that I was the sort you could rave to about your children and not bore him. A lot more went with that. People took me informally. They stopped ushering me into the parlor. They sat me

down next the fire in the living-room, and forgot their company manners, and behaved as if I had been a family doctor pleasantly related to them by marriage. They told me all the things ever they did. They had the same confiding attitude toward Gertrude. There was no need of our "drawing people out," we couldn't have pounded them back in if we had tried.

It was commonplace enough, most of it — in the main a brown-colored experience, mellow and "sympathetic," as the artists say, but far from startling. Father Doherty could reveal things vastly more sensational than any that befell me. One day he burst out of his confession coop, cold sweat dripping off him, and rushed to the street, groaning aloud, and tottered, fainting, before he could reach his house. Everybody knew why within an hour, for the murderer who had been confessing to Father Doherty went to the police station and gave himself up.

And yet, now and then during those nine years, things "happened" to me. I was in David E. Wentworth's confidence before the "crash" and all through the bankruptcy proceedings. I was in State Senator Barnard's confidence from the very beginning of the "graft hunt" and one of the reasons why he is not wearing stripes to this day. I was the go-between when Ben Lapham left his wife and came back and made it up. I was the go-between again when Grace Eldridge had rejected the man she afterward married. Oh, yes, calling is a tame, brown-colored, unexciting round of common-

places, till the heavens cave in on you of a sudden, and you never can tell when they mean to. For instance:

One day about three years ago, I glanced through my little pocket directory of the parish and saw that I had not called on Edith Buckham for several months. It had been difficult to arrange, as she was a trained nurse and "on case" most of the time, for nurses were scarce in Port William. I must go and see her. She was "off case" now. To-morrow she would probably be "on."

I had always liked Edith. Ever since she came, I had met her frequently when visiting the sick. She seemed a nice girl, with pretty manners, and, in her cap and uniform, she was an agreeable young creature to look at — the brown-eyed, smiling, sunshiny type, very attractive and winning. When I went to call upon her at the boardinghouse where she was staying, it never entered my head that anything thunderous could occur.

But what had become of the sunshiny smile? And where was the old, warm, pleasant cordiality? I thought at first, "The poor child is worn out."

I said, "Why, Miss Buckham! You look all done up! You've had a hard pull at the Dixons', but aren't you resting now?"

She laughed it off, with a forced, anxious, self-conscious little pretense at being herself, and tried to talk of other things. But I was alarmed, and came back to the subject. "Can't you make up sleep?" I said. "How much sleep did you get last night?"

Instead of answering, she glanced toward the parlor door, and reddened, and seemed flustered. Before I could guess why, she sprang up, and went to the door, and softly closed it, and when she turned toward me again, her face was not crimson any longer, it was white, and so was mine, for I remembered the last time I had been shut up with a girl in a boardinghouse parlor—the girl we called Miss Richmond, out in Sapphira.

I was scared, and I suppose that is why I have only a vague recollection of the form her confession took. The words I can't recall, but the substance was this: Edith was in love with a married man. The evening before, he had seen her home—and kissed her! It had never happened till then. She was sorry it had happened at all. It was wrong. She knew it. But as for mutual affection, owned up to on both sides—actually, she wanted me to say there was no harm in that—and even to sanction it with a kind of diluted “benefit of clergy.”

“*Edith!*” I said. “How *can* you? He’s married!”

“To a cold woman who dislikes him,” she retorted. “Has he got to go through life without any woman loving him because of that?”

She was not angry, as yet—unless you call it anger when a girl is out of patience with a minister’s standing up for “conventions.”

“Now see here!” I said. “I don’t care who the man is. I’d rather not know. It will be better

every way. But tell me this. What sort of man is he?"

"Splendid!"

I had expected exactly that answer. I hit hard then. I said, "A gentleman?"

She said, "*Of course!*" and there was undisguised indignation in the tone. I was in for it now, angry in my turn, red-hot angry, though not at her.

"A *gentleman!*" I exclaimed. "A nice sort of gentleman, to get you into a mess like this!"

She retorted, contemptuously, "You can't understand it, I see. I guess you were never in love."

Then I went for her in earnest — told her she was being fooled in the same way women had been fooled since the beginning of the world — told her how they wound up — told her she'd get into court as co-respondent and asked her who she thought would respect her after that — and, to clinch it all, said she must break with the man immediately, and leave Port William, and never write to him or let him write to her.

It was a wonder I got it out — unless it was the very thing she secretly wanted. At any rate she let me finish, and never mind the names she called me then.

I stood it. I had expected worse. But when she paused for breath, I said, "All right. If I've got to *put* you out, I can arrange it in less than twenty-four hours. Where'll you get another case, if I tell."

"Tell, if you want to!" she said. "You'll be the first to go."

Those were the last words I ever heard her speak. But about seven weeks after that, I burned a letter. It said she thanked me from the bottom of her heart for having driven her out of town; that a day's delay might have spoiled her existence for her; that she had cut herself off from the man completely; that she knew by the jolly letters she got from people in Port William that I had never told — of course not, for I never intended to; and that she had stepped into a fine "practice" in the city in Central New York from which she wrote. She would have written before, but somehow couldn't, she cried so every time she tried to.

I could understand that. When I went home after that little blood-and-thunder melodrama in the boardinghouse parlor, Gertrude said to me, "Why, Jim — what is it? You're sick!" I told her, "Nonsense! I never felt better in my life," and went up to my study, and sat down in my whirl chair, and buried my face in my arms on my desk, and blubbered like a child.

And still they say a minister never sees people as they are! Even ministers say it. I know a minister who enjoys hanging around a country store in vacation-time because the farmers don't suspect who he is and feel free to swear all they like. "For once, real life." I know another minister who says he is tired of "everlastingly seeing people with their Sunday clothes on," and an ex-minister who tells me he never understood people till he had "escaped." Then, lo and behold, the same fellows who had been "putting on the angel" revealed

themselves as profane, as coarse, and as cynical in their ideas about women! Hurrah! Realities at last!

Perhaps there is some truth in this, or at least the shadow of a half-truth here and there. But when I begin to feel that I am living in an ivory tower with a gold cross on top and no windows, I remember Edith Buckham and our little private melodrama in the boardinghouse parlor. Wasn't that real? Wasn't that life? And wasn't it of a piece with plenty of other experiences?

You can't think how close ministers sometimes get to life. Even the so-called decencies stand aside now and then. Actually, a woman once talked to me about the baby she expected and didn't want. How she wanted that baby before I left! And there are stagey, "improbable" affairs — things only tenth-rate novelists would "use." One afternoon, I was calling on the wife of a periodic drinker who played first violin in a small orchestra. He had been away, out of town, fiddle-scraping at some function or other. While I was there, he came reeling in, ashamed, repentant, and tipsily pious. His wife put her hands to her face and fled. Left alone with me, the poor fellow went down on his knees, and, between whimpers, prayed to his Saviour for forgiveness. Then, without getting up, he reached unsteadily for his violin case, took out the instrument and bow, and played in a passionate, imploring, heart-broken tremolo the tune of the hymn that begins, "Just as I am," and ends with, "Oh, Lamb of God, I come, *I come!*"

Yes, praying with his fiddle!

And while a minister sees life — in cross-section, practically — he also sees death; not as Dickens saw it in his imagination, but as it is — the slumberous, dumb, unheroic thing, bereft of “last words” and, in its pitiful way, sordid. And yet what revelations in blanched faces round about it and in the tears and moans that follow you in your waking hours and haunt you in your sleep! Real? Not even those scenes of misery at a funeral and beside an open grave are half so real as these.

What is it people mean when they talk of “reality”? Oftentimes it seems to me that they prize the reality of shallows rather than the reality of life’s abysmal deeps. True, I am not wanted when men are discussing the latest divorce-case, or the newest cocktail, or Miss Diamond Dizzydale’s “shape” as over against Miss Gaby Lanude’s in “The Follies of Nineteen-Now.” So be it. For I can’t see that that sort of thing discloses their deeper selves, and I rather question its “reality.” They are talking through their hats — outwardly “sporty,” inwardly ashamed.

The realities I care about are the realities of struggle and fear and courage and love and danger and duty and grief and faith — in a word, life. These were what I fed my brain on and my heart, too. They were what began to help me know my people and their needs. They were what gave purpose to my reading. There in Port William, I was not a private scholar, delving among books for the mere pleasure of it. I was seeking from every

high source within my reach the things I found out my people hungered and thirsted after. I was not content to preach *at* them. I wanted to preach *to* them. That was why, instead of my house-to-house visitations' interfering with sermon-writing, it was the other way about. The calls made the sermons.

XII

MY TILT WITH CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

QUITE an angel I appeared in the last chapter. Reading it over again, I am surprised at its air of bland self-satisfaction. Unconsciously I revealed the worst of my besetting sins and the one I was least able to cope with. Nobody showed me my faults. Nobody talked back, except at rare, excited moments when it didn't count. And I, who needed a pastor more than most men do, could have none.

I notice, moreover, a tendency in that chapter to fling altogether too many sacred half-bricks at my predecessor, whereas, oh! the reversal of feeling when, early in the Autumn after our arrival in Port William, along came — or rather, blew — the Dear Departed, to gather up his belongings. A great, hulking, rubicund hilarity of a man, he simply carried us off our feet. Too bad about Göttingen! Think of a roaring good chap like that, whose every prospect pleased, and only "Moabite semicolonology" was vile! Couldn't he take something for it?

However, I must be just a bit "faithful with him." While he would have shone in social work, running up the rents all around him by making

people fight for "a place in the sun" within his zone of influence, it did not seem to me that he was an irreparable loss to the ministry. He lacked the thing most of the Teutonized Americans of my acquaintance have lacked, namely "culture." Except as concerns music, isn't Germany the last place to go for that?

Germany makes men "efficient." Granted. It makes them straight talkers and hard hitters and tremendous intellectual workers. But so does Oxford. So does Edinburgh. So does the Sorbonne. And these other universities give a man that winning, human, lovable grace known as "atmosphere." When he preaches, he can clothe the truth with beauty. There is a sweetness in him that rarely comes of consorting with duelists.

Is this assertion only another proof of self-contentment on my part—a way of pluming myself on never having taken spiritual sauerkraut and lager into my system? Let me go on, then, and plume myself further. For I cannot deny that a very dangerous complacency had got possession of me in Port William or that I was "riding for a fall."

Things went a great deal too smoothly. When those awful book-agents called, offering me a free copy in exchange for a written testimonial, I always squirmed out of it somehow. When scamps and humbugs thought me an "easy mark," I dodged them, too. I even "managed" the incompetents and unemployables who tried to hold me up for letters of recommendation. None of them ever went

away furious, to malign me from one end of my parish to the other. And meanwhile, I managed the aristocrats.

Of these we had too many by far. Their villas lined the shore all the way to Eden Point. Our big, pink summer hotel overflowed with them. Additional nabobs flitted in and out of Port William aboard their yachts. Down toward Braeburn, there was an ostentatious château christened in unconscious humor, "Wadhurst." And in the kindness of their hearts the "colony" set out to "own" Gertrude and me.

It took some adroitness to prevent it, for Port William owed a lot to the nabobs. They put up a handsome new building for our Y. M. C. A., showered charities among the poor, gave employment at liberal wages, and contributed lavishly to the churches, not in cash merely, but in work and good will and a very praiseworthy attendance on Sunday.

Still, it was ridiculous to make a virtue of not letting them monopolize me. I had been snubbed by aristocrats in college, and the few times I had got in with them were unpleasant to remember. I dreaded to repeat the experiment. Their ways were not my ways, nor were their little games my little games. I was following the path of least resistance in keeping reasonably clear of the "colony."

And also in being democratic among my own people. There in Port William, nothing else "went." Bankers, butcher-boys, lawyers, haberdashers,

"author-journalists," soda-clerks, physicians, and baggage-smashers were all on a level. You were wondrous deferential toward shop-girls; like as not, they belonged to grand old families. It was magnificent, especially at a church-social.

I caught the spirit of the place. I could hobnob with Father Doherty and even with the Reverend Arthur Channing Curtis, Unitarian, who was vastly more typical than the great "pulpit-orator" in Sapphira. A man of profound spirituality and warm, genial, mellow big-heartedness, he might almost have been a Methodist. And I had another close friend among "the brethren"—"Snooks" Bentley, who was famous at Byefield for a most amazing uncouthness. He had taken a fresh start, denominationally, before turning up in Port William, and also a fresh start in civilization. Bully for "Snooks"! He astonished me. For I had not as yet come to see how common a phenomenon he represented, or to reflect that it was not more miraculous than the way the savages at a medical college get made over, later on, into entirely "possible" doctors. I chummed up with "Snooks" and enjoyed him.

All in all, then, I was "swimming on my back and smoking a cigar," metaphorically — at peace with the world, serene in my outlook on life, and the more secure in my position as time went on. Neddle Boy behaved — ministers' boys usually do. Frances and Lydia were a shade too angelic, if anything. People held them up as "models." As for Gertrude, Port William adored her. She was the

life of the Sewing Circle, a corner-stone of the Sunday School—her husband's right-hand helper. And the church throve and grew and became "important"—so much so that ministers in smaller towns up and down the coast appealed to me as a sort of friend, philosopher and guide. If I had cared to make myself a church "boss," it would hardly have cost an effort.

Now, there is no ministerial sin quite equal to complacency. I deserved to be trounced for it, and already there was a rod in pickle, and it was I who had pickled the rod. Before I left, I got the trouncing—"good and plenty," as Sapphira would have said. It smarts to this day.

I refer to what came of my ill-advised tilt with Christian Science.

About six years after I had settled in Port William, the first little coterie of Christian Scientists bobbed up, and I gave it hardly a thought. The following year, the movement took form and held regular services in Odd Fellows' Hall. The year after that, it got possession of the rink—a mistaken policy, because premature; the expected crowds held off. I rather chuckled at that. In my self-contentment, I had taken a sneering, contemptuous attitude toward the whole thing, though I had the sense to keep my mouth shut.

But when three of the leading families in my own church quietly went over to "Science," matters began to look grave. I woke up—or rather, the least amiable side of me did. What had seemed to me "a mere folly" and "its own best cure," suddenly

became "a monstrous and devilish apostasy." It took grit to keep my mouth shut now, though somehow I fetched it, while seething inwardly and detesting the new religion with a scornful, unreflecting, intolerant hatred I blush to recall. I have "seen a great light" since then; in fact, I have seen stars, and they were any amount more bewildering than Sapphira's "last star of science." But at the time I was blind as a Cubist, and made the unpardonable mistake of "despising the enemy." Instead of regarding the Eddyites as a natural by-product of the drift of things here in America, I classed it with Dowieism. I neglected to raise the infinitely important question, Why is a Christian Scientist?

I am not particularly anxious just at present to inquire how or where or by whom Christian Science was founded. What I want to get at, if I can, is, why it appeals to such multitudes, and spreads, and continues to spread, so that people are saying, "Fifty years from now there will be two churches in America — Catholics and Christian Scientists."

Suppose I begin by asking who the Christian Scientists are, and giving the answer I have received over and over again from physicians. When I say to a doctor, "Have you lost practice by all this?" his reply is, "No, but the homeops have."

Is there anything very wildly surprising in that? At this distance, years after my outlandish fiasco in Port William, I can see that it was simple enough for people who had been taught a more-than-half-way horror of drugs to go further and

rebel against even the mildest mild pills of the mildest mild doctors, especially when they were roused to insurrection by a modern paraphrase of the old-time Crusaders' cry, "God wills it!"

I have no quarrel with the homeopaths. They served their day and generation faithfully. If they are less numerous than they were, it is because the allopaths have stolen their thunder and most of their lightning. But when I try to explain the immense hold Christian Science has gained in America, this is the first big fact I come upon.

The next is the curious aloofness of our scientific men. A caste apart, they speak "a strange tongue not understood of the people." They are afraid to "popularize" science. What little reaches the general public — and, for that matter, academy and high school students — is mainly the conclusions of science. The patient, laborious, convincing methods by which conclusions are arrived at, nobody takes the trouble to make known among "the laity." Whereas, the laity are all the while being led to ridicule scientists. When a playwright wants to put a rattle-headed old crank on the stage, he makes him a scientist, and the audience, knowing no better, "falls for it."

So it has come to pass that you can stand on a certain street corner in Boston, and have the oddest experience conceivable. Looking westward, you see the stately marble buildings of the Harvard Medical School. Looking eastward, you see the exquisite, summer-cloud-like, white dome of the Mother Church. In the one establishment, disease

germs are being tested with chemicals, peered at through microscopes, fattened in culture tubes. They are tangible, visible, undebatable. At the other establishment, people clothed and in their right minds deny the existence of the very bacteria that thrive by the million over yonder — not ignorant people, either — people as educated, in most respects, as the medical savants themselves.

But science has not only suffered its methods to be misunderstood, it has discredited them by too frequently overstepping the bounds of its legitimate field and going out on bomb-dropping flights among the mysteries of the unseen. "Why do you quote scientists?" any follower of Mary Eddy can retort. "They are your enemies as much as they are ours. Can't you see how it tickles them to make all faith ridiculous?"

And I think that the churches have done a lot, meanwhile, to pave the way for Christian Science. If it is "atrocious" for Eddyism to abolish "conviction of sin," who abolished it first? You can go to church any Sunday, almost anywhere, and come out after service without the least fear that the patrol-wagon will get you before you reach home or the faintest suspicion that it ought to. In the old days, ministers were rebuking prophets. Their sermons were merciless frontal attacks on the conscience. They believed we belonged in hell, and told us so, straight, and bade us flee the wrath to come by seeking the intervention of Divine grace while there was yet breath in us. Doubtless they overdid it, but is there not a peril in the opposite

extreme? Imply constantly that people are good by nature and need only to be made somewhat better, and you can't complain if some Christian Scientist happens along and convinces them there is no such thing as evil.

And I don't see that the churches have much right to scold when Mrs. Eddy's people dismiss the doctrine of the Atonement. Didn't the churches dismiss it first — or come mighty near doing that? While preachers were holding forth about Trusts, and Municipal Government, and the Tripartite Authorship of Genesis, and the Labor Movement, and Darwinism, and Socialism, and "the is-ness of the As-it-Were, the so-ness of the If," a generation grew up in shocking ignorance of the great cardinal doctrines of Christianity. Ask the older people what the Atonement means to them, and you get something. Ask the younger people, and all you get is bewildered looks, a vapid stammer, and no reply worth listening to. How easily such ill-informed Christians pass over into "Science"! They don't miss the doctrine of the Atonement. They never gripped it or so much as touched it with their finger-tips.

Another thing, our Protestant churches have banished the outward aids to faith, and these had their use, even the crudest of them. I don't advocate a return to holy water and the sign of the cross. I don't plead for rosaries and the crucifix. I don't want images restored. But I think there are people who crave some sort of substitute for the things Catholics can see and feel and handle. It is

natural that some people should or Catholicism would never have adopted them. And I believe that just this absence of any appeal to the senses is what accounts to a great extent for the eagerness with which so many Protestants espouse Christian Science. It gives them what Protestantism refuses them — a bodily realization of God's presence. It gives it through cures — and whether the cures are real or fancied, matters little. The large outstanding fact is, the believer is convinced that he has witnessed wonders of Divine goodness wrought within the bounds of his own physical person.

And now another point. There is a kind of floating, half-formed, ill-defined opinion that counts for as much, oftentimes, as the dicta of science or the dogmas of the church — more, perhaps; for you can combat the dicta of science and assail the dogmas of the church, whereas it is difficult to wrestle with a fog-bank. When people keep saying, "Well, after all, there's a good deal of truth in Christian Science," how are you going to answer them back? You don't know quite what they mean, and neither do they. If they did, they might "come out of it."

You see — don't you? — what can result from a wide-spread, mouth-to-mouth bromidiom like that, repeated constantly, never refuted. Without being aware of it, people drift over into thinking, "Why shouldn't we go in for Christian Science? Everybody speaks well of it, even the outsiders."

Logical? Hardly! But, the longer I inhabit the earth's surface, the less impressed I am with

logic as a guiding force in the affairs of human beings. Interests, inclinations, desires, temperament, social suggestion, and a hundred other influences count for more. Sentiment does — and, begging the Sapphira Unitarian's pardon, emotion. I don't hold it up against the Christian Scientists that you "can't argue with them." Neither could you have argued with me when I fell in love with Gertrude.

But there is a choice of arguments, and in our search for logic with which to floor a would-be Christian Scientist, it strikes me that we have deserved the epithet Mr. Dooley bestowed on Grover Cleveland — "industhrees, but nawt very bright."

"Good heavens!" we have cried. "How can you swallow a gospel got up by an ignorant, illiterate woman?"

The answer to this was easy. Our man retorted, "What's so difficult about that? Haven't you told us Matthew, Mark, and John were simple, uneducated peasants, and that Jesus Himself was a carpenter?"

Certainly our man "has us there." For we have maligned the authors of the Gospels and misunderstood Jesus. In His day even the Rabbis had trades; and St. Paul, though a university don, or practically that, worked at tent-making. Masters of an incomparable narrative style, like the Evangelists, might be first-class intellects and at the same time laborers.

Again, we have jeered the Christian Science interpretation of the physical world — so-called —

and its denial that matter exists. Whoa, brethren! Didn't the learned Bishop Berkeley pooh-pooh the physical world, and didn't the philosopher Hume argue away matter completely, and, not content with that, argue away the arguer himself, so that nothing remained? Philosophy has got out of the hole, to be sure, but it is not at all contemptuous in its attitude toward Berkeley and Hume.

Nor should we be especially contemptuous in our attitude toward the self-contradictions in Christian Science, glaring though some of them are. While it is illogical to say disease doesn't exist and then in the next breath say Christian Science has cured you of sixteen deadly diseases, and while it is illogical to be afraid of malicious animal magnetism when you have denied the existence of evil, we have not far to look for self-contradictions in our own treasured beliefs. Three are one, one is three — we believe it. And just see what the doctrine of sin leads to! If God is good, why doesn't He abolish sin? Because He can't? If God is Almighty, why doesn't He abolish sin? Because He doesn't want to? Or again, what of the clash between our belief in the entire freedom of the will and our belief in the omnipotence of God? Theology is strewn with these antinomies, yet we go on believing, for we are aware that "we know in part and prophesy in part," and we trust that underlying the conflicting ideas there is an unrevealed truth that harmonizes them all. We don't think of such ideas as mutually exclusive, we think of them as pertaining to sacred mysteries.

What wonder, then, if a man seven-eighths persuaded to cast in his lot with the Christian Scientists has — well, perhaps not a clean-cut conviction based on a definite, thorough understanding of the theologians and their position, but at least a bent of mind they developed in him by their acceptance of Biblical doctrine despite difficulties?

Sometimes I suspect that our indignation against Eddyism springs less from a philosophic disgust than from the *odium theologicum*.

It is a human enough *odium*, doubtless. Consider it — or rather, consider first a parallel case outside the theological dogma-kennel. Suppose, for example that Senator A., the Heaven-High Protectionist, gets to squabbling with Senator B., the Free-Trader, about the Tariff. Neither of them possesses the rock-bottom facts about the Tariff. Nobody does. It is an affair of opinion, of theory — in short, of faith. But A. sees clearly that if he lets B. convince him, away will fly his reputation, his constituency, and his job. The minute this dawns on Senator A., Senator B. ceases to be his opponent in a talking-match and becomes his enemy — a terrible, man-eating bandersnatch demanding not only his money but his life. A. conceives a hatred for B., and, if opportunity offers, will punch B.'s head. Meanwhile, B. "has it in for" A., and quite naturally.

And now suppose a little, well-peppered feast of reason with a Bishop on one side of the table and an Atheist on the other. To the Atheist it appears that the Bishop is trying to snare him into a front

pew where he will be the laughing-stock of the ungodly. To the Bishop it appears that the Atheist is trying to rob him of his crosier, his episcopal palace, his income, his principles, his good name, his faith, and his hope of Heaven. Moreover, they are scared, both of them. Neither is in possession of rock-bottom facts. "Knowing in part," they attempt to prophesy *in toto*, and make a bad fist at it. Each scores on the other only to be scored on in turn, though without acknowledging the hits. The sense of insecurity increases. Instead of light, there is heat, and if the Atheist is the first to throw plates, it is lucky for the Bishop.

But while I recognize the entire naturalness of the *odium theologicum*, I can't say much for its nobility, and I hope it was not this that made me "light into" Christian Science, there in Port William. There was motive enough without that.

One morning in mid-summer I unfolded the Port William *Tribune* after breakfast and got a "facier." Lo! across four-fifths of its front page, the half-toned architect's drawing of a beautiful Italian Renaissance temple, with this underneath:

"First Church of Christ, Scientist, Port William. Gift of Mrs. Gerald Vanderhoof. Edifice to be erected on Look-Out Hill at a cost of \$350,000. Campanile will be visible from Free Haven and Trent's Island, and, in the other direction from Port Granger. It is estimated that mariners will be able to sight it from a distance of twenty-five miles out at sea."

What a scoop! Probably Mrs. Vanderhoof had

had this project in mind ever since she began spending her summers at our big, pink hotel. Probably the Christian Scientists had been in the secret for months. But nothing had leaked out. It was a thunderbolt from a clear sky. I flung down the *Tribune*, ran to the telephone, and called up our renowned "author-journalist."

"I want a whole page in next week's paper," I said, "for we've got to smash Christian Science right here and now and for keeps, or what's to become of the other churches in Port William? I'll finish it off in my sermon on Sunday morning, if you'll agree to take the manuscript and print it verbatim."

He agreed—in fact, jumped at it. Any newspaper would have, especially in a small town like ours, where "sensations" were scarce. Besides, he was as alarmed as I was. How were we to foresee the "rich man's panic" in Wall Street and the collapse of the Vanderhoof fortune? At that time, we supposed that the beautiful Italian Renaissance temple would be built, campanile and all.

As the *Tribune* came out on Tuesdays I had leisure enough to get ready a white-hot broad-side, and, from an "author-journalist's" point of view, it was incontestably a beauty. From the theological point of view, also. Likewise from the "historical" and philosophical and scientific points of view. But from the Christian point of view—oh, the bitterness of it, the intolerance, the ungenerous, dishonorable rancor! I was angry. I was jealous and scared. I was in no mood to be

fair or considerate, and lacked the sense, as well as the grace, to hold my tongue.

I advertised the onslaught, not only by word of mouth but by notices tacked up wherever tradesmen would suffer it, announcing that I was to preach on "Christian Science, the Great Apostasy." The expected happened. When I reached the church, Sunday morning, I found it jammed to suffocation. My own people were there. People from other churches were there, along with pagan outsiders drawn by curiosity, and the bungalow tribe from up and down the shore, and the fancy-buckboard contingent from the hotel. In their desperation the ushers had brought up camp-chairs from the vestry and placed them in the aisles, and even then there were people standing, and it was not till after the invocation that they all managed to get seated. I am glad I had a manuscript. Otherwise the crowd might have gone to my head and precipitated a worse tirade than occurred, though that was disgraceful enough, heaven knows.

I began by reviewing the gossip collected by the five muckrakers who collaborated under one name in writing a magazine series since published in book form. Then I quoted the authority on mental pathology who, without ever having seen the lady, had pronounced Mrs. Eddy a "case." I said almost any unbalanced humbug could start a new religion in America if he knew how to go at it. The trick was to say, "Keep your Bible, but take a hint from the polygamous gold tablets I found in my

yard," or, "Keep your Bible, but take me, for I am another of those Elijahs," or, "Keep your Bible, but take 'Science and Health, with a Key to the Scriptures.'"

I attacked Christian Science as un-Christian, first. I said it not only denied the facts of sin and atonement, but set a premium on selfishness. It appealed to the sort of people who could deify their personal comfort.

Next, I attacked it as unscientific. Here were individuals declaring it had cured them of tuberculosis. But who knew they had ever had tuberculosis, and who knew they hadn't got it still, and, if they hadn't, who knew it was Christian Science that had cured them? There were huge racks of crutches in churches abroad; did those cures prove the truth of Catholicism? Why not charge them up to psychotherapy?

And then about "malicious animal magnetism" — was that scientific? At Salem a century and more ago, a similar phenomenon was reported, and not under any too dignified a name. Witchcraft!

From this I passed to the Christian Science death-list, and said that while Eddyism was perhaps as cheerful a mode of suicide as any, I thought I should prefer turning on the gas, which is a fool-killer of long-established reputation; but when it came to murder, instead of suicide, and especially when it came to child-murder in an attempt to treat diphtheria by incantation, I guessed it was time the authorities stepped in.

I wound up by ridiculing the whole delusion, sav-

ing as my final shot the story of a Christian Science friend of mind who, immediately after conversion, went to a dentist, opened his bill, and had all the fillings taken out of his teeth.

Looking back, I feel that there ought to be a law against such sermons as that. It verged close on slander. It was libelous, to a degree, and perhaps criminally. And at the same time, it was a swindle. Instead of feeding my flock, as I had engaged to do, I had entertained them with a kind of single-handed dog-fight.

And a pretty cowardly one at that, for the Christian Scientists were not there, and, even had they come, would have been too Christian as well as too scientific to hit back.

However, the sermon had great "success." My people nearly pumped my arm off, congratulating me. Visitors from other churches said they "wouldn't have missed it for worlds." Strangers crowded up to be introduced. I was the man of the hour (sixty minutes, sixty, count them) and, as Sapphira would have said, a "hot Willie"—yes, indeed—"good and plenty."

As the church began to empty out, the *Tribune's* one reporter touched my elbow and said, "You couldn't let me have your manuscript at once, could you? Something might happen to it between now and to-morrow." I gave it to him, and started down the aisle. And it was then that I was conscious for the first time that an awful vengeance awaited me. Still seated, in a pew near the door, was the great Mrs. T. Ralston Wentworth, a leader

in the purlieus of big-pink-summer-hoteldom and a "parson-chaser" I had dodged, off and on for six years. As I approached, she rose in all her magnificence, and simply soused me with gush. I was "wasted in Port William." I ought to be "a metropolitan divine." And more to match!

I squirmed. For her manner had something curiously authoritative about it. My thoughts jumped back to the day she had told me of her "church home" in a big Middle Western city, and I seemed to recall that they were without a pastor out there. I remembered vaguely a paragraph to that effect in our denominational weekly. I also remembered a nickname I had heard—"the Church of St. Crœsus."

No minister who is happy in his parish likes to have the suggestion of a change plumped at him. It is unsettling. For days, or maybe weeks, he is a tumult of conflicting emotions, and so is his wife. And meanwhile he wonders how his parishioners are taking it. They express a grieved anxiety, to be sure, yet is it not possible that they feel at least a faint suspicion that he has outlived his usefulness there and might as well go? In any case, there is gossip. Some say he "will accept because of the salary." Others say he "owes it to himself to secure a larger field." And even if the gossip comes to an abrupt stop, for cause, the mischief it does survives it.

Just as the mischief my sermon against Christian Science survived the Sunday of its delivery

and the Tuesday of its verbatim publication in the *Tribune*.

I soon saw the "break" I had made. Before Tuesday noon, Miss Pervey, a Christian Scientist, dropped in with a great basketful of flowers for Alice. After luncheon, I sat down on the Parsonage piazza with the new *Scribner*, and Ed Walbridge, Christian Scientist, came over from across the street, smiling genially as he walked up the path and called out, "We've just been reading your sermon. How I wish I could write like that!" Dropping the subject there, he stayed and chatted amiably for fully a quarter of an hour.

It was the same way with the rest. Hurt, outraged, distressed though they must have been, they were sweetness itself. They were not shamming. It would have taken the world's best actors a month to rehearse such a part as theirs. Calling it shamming would have been to credit them with downright genius. I knew better. I knew them for ordinary, commonplace folks, entirely sincere. They might be guilty of a "great apostasy" but at any rate their Christianity beat mine at one point. They could "turn the other cheek."

Oh, the shame I felt! That evening I told Gertrude I would give anything to call back the things I had said, and I meant it from the bottom of my heart. For I saw that there were laws against my misdemeanor after all—the law of common decency, for one thing, the law of common sense for another. I had not "smashed" Christian Science,

I had persecuted it. And "have ye not heard, have ye not read" that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church"?

Just so! On my way to service the following Sunday morning, I noticed something new and alarming. It was not the fine weather, merely, that had brought out such unusual numbers of church-goers, nor were they going in the usual direction, most of them. I passed several of my own people. They, too, were going the unusual way. As nearly as I could guess (guess how I guessed it!) the tide had set toward the rink. Why so?

Because the promised Italian Renaissance had advertised Christian Science? No, because I had. Talk about boomerangs! When I reached my church, behold, eleven empty pews! Tell-tale gaps in the others, moreover. Still more disquieting, four rather pompous, rather purse-proud-looking gentlemen seated in the third row and captained by the great Mrs. T. Ralston Wentworth — strangers, all four.

I knew what that meant. A committee — from "the Church of St. Crœsus."

I made a poor showing that day. No minister preaches whole-heartedly to a decimated congregation, when he realizes that it is he who has decimated it. Besides, I saw that the simple gospel struck them as a bit tame after the affair of the Sunday before. To make matters worse, one side of my brain was tormented about St. Crœsus while the other was attempting to preach.

All the accounts of St. Crœsus and his adherents

came rushing through my mind — stories of their worldliness, their arrogance, their snobbery — one story in particular, for it was to the Church of St. Crœsus that a mischievous (or perhaps idealistic) editor sent a newspaper girl two Sundays in succession. The first Sunday, she went poorly dressed, and got shoved into a corner behind a pillar under the gallery, and nobody spoke to her. The second Sunday she “dressed to kill.” Result? A center-aisle seat in the pew of an absent multimillionaire, and a “hospitality committee” of grand dames bustling up after service to “do the sweetie-sweetie.”

If I had not known Mrs. T. Ralston Wentworth as a born promoter, I could have doused my anxieties by telling myself the strangers from afar would be disappointed in my sermon. But, now that Mrs. T. Ralston had got them there, she would see it through, and what did men of that stamp know about sermons anyhow?

I thought, “Well, you fool, you’ve had your fun walloping Christian Science, and here’s your punishment. Be a man, and take it. Never mind if the Church of St. Crœsus is the hardest, most discouraging, most utterly deterrent parish you ever heard of; if they call you, go.”

They called me. Mrs. T. Ralston made them. Later on, I found out why. She had been snubbed by the Christian Scientists’ would-be benefactor, Mrs. Gerald Vanderhoof, and was getting even by elevating their tormentor to the rank of a “metropolitan divine.”

It was bitter punishment, but I took it, and went. I had spoiled my usefulness in Port William. And if getting in with St. Cræsus on orders from Mrs. T. Ralston was rather like being elected Mayor by the Tammany tiger, even a tiger-made Mayor can be straight if he chooses, and I thought I should find work to do — indeed, a work demanding some courage and devotion — in a parish with that infernal nickname. St. Cræsus! It sounded as if I might expect to see an edifice built entirely of stocks, bonds, and money-bags, with a gold dollar sign on top for a weather-vane.

XIII

"THE CHURCH OF ST. CROESUS"

IN saying my say about candidating, some chapters back, I was a bit too ferocious perhaps. Chivalry, if nothing else, prescribes more forbearance toward a doddering old custom with one leg in the grave and the other so groggy.

Having escaped candidating when I came to Port William and again in getting called to the big Middle Western "metropolis," I was chivalrous enough toward it now. In fact, I went further. I wondered if it might not pay to set it on its pins once more, granting a single condition, and give it a new lease of life. The condition I had in mind was the idea of turning it right-about-face, so as to let my parish-elect do the simpering and the showing off while I, at my leisure, ambled along toward a decision as to whether or no St. Croesus "suited."

Happy thought! With this mental reservation to sustain me, I could stick it out a month or two at least. Then, if the Mammon of Unrighteousness filled me with incurable loathing, I would cut the "metropolitan divine" nonsense, shake the gold-dust from off my feet, and take to the tall timber.

There is no denying it, my first experiences were outrageous.

As the "silly season" was not yet over, the newspapers welcomed me as a relief from the usual sea-serpents, phantom air-ships, and six-legged babies with wings. Their reporters wanted interviews and my photograph — and poor Gertrude's. I was even "put on the wire" along with estimates as to how many million dollars I "preached to." And notoriety broke out where least expected; our denominational weekly "featured" me — eyes, nose, and mouth — on its very cover. As if all this were not enough, there came overtures threatening a "D.D."

I felt like a fool.

Especially when I confronted that architectural brass-band salvo, my church, with its great, loud, blaring spire and a little one that tootled, and a shrieking cupola in addition. There was not a square foot anywhere but screamed with blatant checker-boardings or ostentatious carvings or impudent, purse-proud traceries. Whole battalions of flying buttresses seemed bent on out-bawling the wantonly self-assertive maze of gargoyles, crockets, and finials.

This sounds harsh — my account of it, I mean — but you must remember I had been nine years in Port William. I was no longer a tyro. My taste was formed, and formed on standard models.

As I surveyed the "Church of St. Cræsus," I said to myself, "Great snakes! Solomon in all his glory was never arrayed like that. Good reason! Solomon was a gentleman."

It seemed to me that St. Cræsus had crawled up

the red and blue arabesque of his slate roof, seated himself close to the costly bronze filigree along its sky-line, and was shouting at the top of his lungs, "Say, ain't I the wealthy article? Look me up in Bradstreet."

As for the impression when I stepped inside, the word that came uppermost was "Wow!"

Not a reverent word, to be sure. But neither was it a reverent interior. You felt that the labors of cunning artificers in velvets and brocades, in cushionings and luxurious carpetings, in wood and hammered brass and stenciled plaster and inlaid marbles had been expended, not to the glory of God, but to the glory of nabobs. No extravagance was too fantastic if it tickled their sense of importance and contributed to their "comfort." I was reminded of a dialogue alleged to have taken place in the Waldorf-Astoria:

"Hiram, why didn't you put your boots aoutside the door for the porter to black?"

"Gawsh! I was afeerd to. I was a-thinkin' as haow he'd gild 'em."

Whom did they worship in the "Church of St. Croesus"? Jesus the Carpenter? No! Themselves and one another! And yet, among windows dedicated to worthies who in this life had been known as "our largest cold-cream man," "our largest peanut-butter man," "our largest cough-drop man," and so on and on, I noticed an elaborate creation in Tiffany glass where Jesus was pictured at His work-bench, toiling with saw and plane.

What distressed me was not the incongruity—

there, of all places. What distressed me was the soft, weak, pretty-pretty, sweet-sixteenish face some effeminate artist had bestowed upon the Carpenter. It was not the face of the Victor Messiah, all-conquering and regnant, Son of God and Son of Man. It was the face of a wax Madonna — plus “whiskers”!

Don't imagine that the Catholics have “cornered” Mariolatry. There is a lot of it among Protestants, the country over. Mighty convenient they find it. Why should “our largest cold-cream man” feel called upon to obey and imitate and — yes, fear — a bearded Madonna? He can sing his placid little hymns, listen to a rose-leaf sermon, and have a milk-soppy illusion of devoutness in prayer-time, and go away as worldly at heart as before he came. He can worship a rose-leaf Madonna on Sunday morning, a rose-leaf Gaby Deslys on Monday evening. Why not? For the truth is, his attitude toward the deified lady with the silken beard is not worship. It is condescension.

I understood, now, what ailed a church that could tolerate the pink-candy caricature of Jesus, there in the window. Its religion, so-called, was a kind of esthetic sentimentalism. It was a thing apart from realities. It was a mythology rather than a religion. And nobody lets his mythology interfere with dividends or stock-jobbing or rebating or renting apartments to the “daughters of joy”—God pity them!—or with a seat among “good Bohemians” at “The Follies of Nineteen-Now.” Nice, comfortable, lenient mythology!

When it comes to realities, the candy-pink “freak” in the window, ahmen, has nothing to do with the case.

Happily, Gertrude and I were in the throes of moving. General Sherman never moved. And it was appropriate weather—such heat as we had never experienced in Port William. To a degree (ninety-nine in the shade, if you want me to particularize) minor troubles served as a benign counter-irritant. There were times when I could almost forget St. Cræsus.

Besides, there was the drollery of settling a splendid Parsonage, and of wallowing in a ridiculously extravagant income, and of reckoning up the “advantages” we could give the youngsters.

We had our joys to ourselves for the most part. Few visitors came in. I thought probably the grand dames of the parish were holding off till they could make up their minds how “possible” Gertrude was. We had expected that. We relished laughing at the situation, for, obviously, the joke was on the grand dames. But we failed to realize, those first days, that “everybody was out of town.” The magnificent houses, up and down the superb, tree-shaded avenue, were kept up in all the appearance of occupancy from their well-tended flower-beds to their half-open windows. You would never have guessed that the Brant-Lothrop's were at Deauville, tuft-hunting in the interest of their daughters, or that Mrs. Arthur Sevier (Mrs. Frank Charnley before her divorce) was riding to hounds in the park at Eltingham Castle, or that Mrs. T.

Ralston Wentworth still shone in her wonted radiance at Port William's big pink summer hotel. We amused ourselves by strolling out, between tussles with excelsior and burlaps, and surveying what Mr. Dooley has styled "thim homes iv luxury and alimony."

But I was unable to conquer a burning, wriggling curiosity about my predecessor in the see of St. Crœsus, and one day — the third after our arrival — I broke loose from the unpacking and settling operations and trotted downtown to try and pick up a volume of sermons he had published. I obtained it without difficulty, and that evening Gertrude and I looked it over.

Funny enough sermons they were, I must say. A little Ruskin, a little Emerson, a little Stevenson, a passage or two from Shelley or Keats, and, by way of conclusion, each time, a politely worded hint that, strange though it might seem, "this might hold true even in religion." Nice, proper, dainty, helpless sermons — the work of a "pulpit canary." No wonder the parish could tolerate that blasphemous stained-glass caricature of Jesus! What was there to hinder? For seventeen years, the pulpit canary had been scandalously overpaid for preaching. He had not preached. He had twittered.

The next morning, I pumped our new cook about the church, not because I thought her an authority (except, of course, on the disciplinary side of her profession — we had bumped into that already) but because she had been in the city ever since she

"came over," and would perhaps know a thing or two about "the Central's" history. That was its name, officially. Only scoffers like myself spoke of "St. Croesus."

According to Kate, it was the old story—a downtown church moved uptown. If I cared to, though she "guessed I wouldn't," I could go and take a look at the original "Central" at the corner of Livingston and Greene Streets. She dropped the subject there, as cheerfully as if it had been so much cut glass. I fancied I knew why.

So, to the corner of Livingston and Greene Streets I went that evening, and Gertrude with me.

It was not in a pleasant part of the city. Turning south after leaving the sky-scraper district, we passed through a shabby region of small shops liberally interspersed with saloons and billiard halls. Then matters improved a bit. Instead of shops, there were rows of once dignified dwellings, with "Furnished Rooms" placarded in windows here and there, a few notices of "Table board—twenty-one meals—gents \$4, ladies \$3.50," and a profusion of palmists' signs, dressmakers' signs, dancing-teachers' signs, and at rare intervals the gilt balls hung out denoting "money to loan." On the lodging-house porches, young people were chattering and laughing. Everybody seemed young in the neighborhood. It was a home of the homeless, overflowing with the unattached, the just-come-to-the-city, the irresponsible and unbefriended.

After we had walked several blocks, Gertrude said, "I wonder if we've come the right way. You

don't see anything like a church hereabouts, do you?"

I said, "No, and it's a burning shame. If ever a neighborhood cried aloud for a church, that neighborhood is this one."

"How I wish we could settle here!" said Gertrude, and pressed my arm. "Jim, I'd give anything to see you try it! Look! There's the place for a church, over there where that disgusting tough show is. It's —"

She clutched my arm then. I can feel the clutch still. And I don't wonder she couldn't finish the sentence.

For we had come to the corner of Livingston and Greene Streets.

Over the way, loomed a bulky, red-brick meeting-house, steepleless now, and with the legend in electric lights above its Norman entrance "Flinn's Garden Theatre." To the left of the door, a huge red-and-yellow poster announced "The Sporty Grass Widows." Another, to the right, depicted an "actress" called Charmion, undressing in a trapeze. Beneath the lithograph we read, "Outstrips anything you ever saw."

I said to Gertrude, "This can't be it — it's outrageous! Kate must have told me wrong."

A girl was coming toward us at the moment. Gertrude stopped her, and asked her if that was the Central Church.

"Used to be," said the girl, grinning, "but hell, it ain't no church now — not by a damn sight!"

Say, lamp that lady in her corset. That's what the boys fall for, these days."

I would give a good deal to know what the poor child made of it when Gertrude burst out crying.

We turned back, wretched — a country parson and his wife, familiar enough with the story of churches that had run after dollars and away from souls, familiar enough with second-hand accounts of churches made over into warehouses, into factories, into moving-picture shows and into theaters. Now, for the first time, we were seeing it with our own eyes. And it was the Central — *our* church — that had done that monstrous thing! I ached.

Neither of us spoke till we had got back into "civilization." Then Gertrude said to me, "It's just possible that when that girl was a baby the minister of the Central Church held her in his arms, and baptized her into the name of the Father and the Son, and the —"

"Gertrude! *Don't!*" I blurted. "I can't bear it."

There are a lot of things in this world of ours that have to get worse before they can get better, and ministerial wrath is one of them. I boiled, inwardly, as we walked on through the district toward the region of spooky-looking sky-scrapers, and when we came to the corner where we had left the trolley and where we were to take another — home to the Parsonage of St. Cræsus — I boiled over.

"We've got the wrong name entirely for our

church," I said. "From now on, let's call it St. Lucifer's."

Gertrude laughed, and that was the turning-point.

Ridiculous, this frenzied denunciation of people we had not so much as met! Ridiculous, and shallow, and cheap; vulgar, too, and enormously unreasonable. I would wait and suspend judgment. Perhaps the blame lay rather with the erstwhile shepherd of the flock than with the flock themselves. Perhaps there had been extenuating circumstances. Perhaps it had never struck them what a "great apostasy" they were guilty of when they ran away from dowdidom and went in for "high-flying at fashion." And, supposing it had all been true about the girl Gertrude said might have been baptized at the Central into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which was the needier — in God's sight — that girl, or the Central?

I don't mean to be too hard on myself, however, for my blast against "St. Lucifer's." I was a countryman in town and easily shocked. I had come from a democratic community, an ideal parish, a work congenial at all points. I had not come willingly. I was here because I had spoiled my usefulness in Port William. That rankled. It had cost no very heroic effort to say, "I've had my fun, now I'll be a man and take my medicine." But when the nasty dose began to scald my throat and turn my stomach, it was small comfort reflecting that I had brought it on myself.

"Gertrude," I said, "I believe the Saviour will forgive us for being angry and bitter, but He came into the world to save sinners and I don't think He would give them up just because they've got a few automobiles and diamond tiaras and fine houses. I think He would convert the tough girl, but I think He would be fully as quick to convert St. Lucifer, don't you? And anyhow, we can do wonders with St. Lucifer's money."

"Tainted!" said Gertrude, and perhaps she would have said more in that vein if a jolly voice behind us had not cried out, "Good evening! I want to introduce myself to our new minister. My name is Robertson Knight."

"Hoo-roar!" I shouted, wheeling around, and Gertrude exclaimed, "Well! well! *well!*" and the old fellow swung his big Stetson hat in the air, and, stuffing it under his arm, gripped my hand and, with a "Don't shoot, pardner!" to me, kissed Gertrude.

That sort of thing is likely to happen when people who have been huge friends in Sapphira come face to face again "back in God's country." Besides, nine years had whitened his hair and beard, and it was an entirely grandfatherly kiss he gave Gertrude, though she blushed crimson and laughed, not less excitedly than I did.

Well, well, *well!*

As a matter of fact, meeting Robertson Knight ought hardly to have surprised me. Even in the old days, Sapphirans were always "going East"—meaning sometimes a trip to Omaha, but as often a

frolic in Washington, New York, and Boston. As the saying went, Sapphira was a "rattling good place to live, if you had money, and didn't have to stay there." And yet, the last I had seen of Robertson Knight, he was "flat on his back," ruined by the smash of the First National. Even in the midst of our hilarious little reunion, I looked him up and down to judge if he was prospering — an absurd thing to do, for hadn't he just declared himself connected with the Central?

We forgot about our trolley-car, and "hit the grit," walking on uptown together and turning one another's histories inside out as we went.

His was commonplace enough, from the Rocky Mountain point of view. Within barely a month after the "smash," a solitary miner on the Butterfly Claim had "pecked through" into a regular first-class Golconda of an "ore-body." Shares Mrs. Knight had bought as a joke for a nickel apiece suddenly jumped to par. This had not meant riches — there were not enough of the shares — but it had been sufficient to bring the Knights "back to God's country" with the nest-egg of a fortune. Didn't we want to come up to the house? Mrs. Knight would be charmed — oh! "good and plenty" — only, we must expect to find her rather wilted, as they had "caught a red-hot sizzler" in the Pullman on their way home from the Adirondacks.

As for the history Robertson Knight got out of us, you know it all. When he asked if I was still an "apostle to the intellect," I said, "No, we had

a 'necktie party' for the 'intellect.' Be-you-tiful hanging! Hanged three. Higher Criticism and Evolution walked up to it nice and sweet, and if the New Theology was a le-e-etle back'ard, it cashed in its checks all the same."

At "the house"—up among "thim homes iv luxury and alimony"—I narrowly escaped Gertrude's fate, Mrs. Knight was so overjoyed at seeing us. It was a complete surprise. They had been out of the world, hiding in a log-cabin to keep away from newspapers and market reports, and the news of my call had not reached them there. Mr. Knight had only heard of it by chance half an hour before meeting us downtown.

Now, if you imagine that a couple from Sapphira must have cut an amusing figure, there in Belmont Place, you have forgotten that while Sapphira appeared related to Nick Carter on one side of the family, it appeared related to a Fifth Avenue belle on the other. The Knights had been people of refinement and sophistication before they went West. In Sapphira, they were—oh! not swells, by any means, but agreeably dignified and conventional. They were the same now. Prosperity had not spoiled them. Even "St. Lucifer's" hadn't. Their connection with that travesty of a church had come about accidentally. Mrs. Knight had been dragged into it by a cousin of hers, and somehow they couldn't quite extricate themselves.

Still, as I drew them out about the Central and its nabobs and the circumstances back of its flight

from the purlieus of dowdidom, I could see that the Knights were inclined to be rather tolerant in their attitude, not only toward the nabobs, who "were good, bad, and indifferent like the rest of the world," but even toward the Central's "exodus from the land of the Egyptians." What else could a Central have done?

Well, what else? What indeed? Look the case over and judge.

Suppose, to begin with, a "land" not in the least "Egyptian." Cleanly, tree-shaded avenues lined with mansions representing entire decorum and respectability. People rich, according to the standards of that day. An atmosphere of plain living only a very little modified by wealth. Few attempts at fashion, still fewer at "high-flying." In the midst of it the Central. Not a live church, really, and yet not aware of its short-comings. A minister preaching Keats and Shelley, a congregation putting up with it because they liked him personally, and gradually getting educated down to his level. All in all, an ordinary enough type of church, neither pagan, quite, nor depraved.

Next, suppose a new railroad, gashing through about six blocks West of the Central. Then, along the railroad, black tenants taking the place of white tenants. On the fringe of the negro settlement, wild foreigners attracted by the depreciation in real-estate. People hesitate about abandoning the comfortable homes they were born in, but it is not nice to hear a jabber of Italian from over one's back fence, or to look out from one's rear windows

upon Syrians and Greeks, or to have the squaws of Asia Minor waddle past one's abode balancing lumber-piles on their heads. As "Egypt" expands, street by street, it begins to look dark for the Central.

To be sure, the foreign wave halts, tentatively, changes its mind and expands in a new direction. Three blocks still separate the Central from Egypt. But the mischief has been done. Fine old houses come on the market at less than it cost to build them. Quack doctors, card-readers, slatternly land-ladies, and players on wind instruments make their entrance, respectability its exit. The faithful flee from an Egypt smitten with ten plagues at once.

But, seriously now, are they such awful plagues? Are the invaders all monsters of iniquity? Far from it. The vast majority have souls. Lodging-houses and boarding-houses teem with country-bred youngsters of both sexes. They are Americans, mostly, with possibilities. The Central wishes it could get hold of them.

It tries. It tolls its bell. Bravo! It sends "friendly visitors" calling. Again bravo! It adds a violinist to its choir, doubles its advertising space in the Saturday evening paper, and, albeit with some inward gollywobbles, posts up a red-and-black proclamation of its attractions, so that Egyptians who run may read. For a third time, bravo!

But also, fiddlesticks!

What do youngsters in furnished rooms care for all that? Their reply is a stupid, obstinate, un-

godly "Nay, nay, Pauline!" They have not come to town for holiness' sake. They are here for "what there is in it," including high jinks.

Meanwhile, it gets more and more irksome for the Central's congregation to "continue in business at the old stand," nearly two miles from the fashionable district where they are at present living. In the early days, they fought the trolley line; now, in order to go from the region of swelldom to the region of dowdidom, they must transfer at Lincoln Square, be thrown off at Missouri Avenue and Livingston Streets, and foot it across a district that has become decidedly "impossible."

This or drive, and driving is inconvenient with no place to put up one's equipage during church-time.

In a word, the Central is no longer central. The congregation dwindles. Whole families ally themselves with other parishes. It begins to look as if, after a year or two more, the little dissertations on Stevenson and the poets would be wasting their sweetness in a vacuum. So there is talk of moving uptown, being convenient again, and saving the Central's neck while there is yet time. Against the grain and in the face of considerable opposition, the Central at last resolves to pull up stakes. Why court extinction by hoping against hope and nursing a lost cause?

Now see what has been going on uptown, all this while? Boys with Gamma this and Sigma that on their waistcoats in alternating diamonds and rubies fetch home guests bearing surnames illustrious

for social grandeur. Girls from Eastern "finishing" schools poke fun at the old, simple, "folksy" standards. Wake up! Wealth has doubled—more than doubled, some say. High time the "Queen City of the Interior" began to "make culture hum" by building palaces, substituting champagne for Postum, and observing "distinctions." Uptown, "exclusiveness" sets in.

Funny exclusiveness! It fails to exclude Mrs. Eldridge, whom the society editor once "featured" as "*née* Perkins, *née* Smith, *née* Thompson," and whose lawyer had his hands full getting her latest "decree," even in Reno. It fails to exclude "Pop" Williams, with all those indictments to his name. It fails to exclude Frankie Jenks, and would laugh at you for proposing it. He is "the recognized social souse." Hurrah for the new aristocracy! It is superior to morals, just as its "captains of industry" are superior to the crotchets of Washington, D. C.

But, once you get inside it, you notice that the new aristocracy is not happy. It feels insecure. A nervous dread besets it. Given a mere fifteen-minute flurry in Wall Street, and bang goes your social position. It can go bang without that. Others may outshine you, or you may inadvertently take up with somebody not swell enough. Defend yourself. Snub your old friends, forget your relations, and be arrogant and distant and unkind to "upstarts"—that is to say, upstarts like yourself. Show them their place!

Into this strange, raw, un-American (and also

un-European) Vanity Fair comes the Central. It erects a gorgeous calamity — the architects see to that. It fronts the "Queen City's" grandest avenue, boasts the finest "plant," and sets up to be "a little sweller than swell."

Don't be too hard on the Central. It is not used to this sort of thing, and, in its innocent, "rattled," anxious greenness, overdoes it.

With immense success, however. "Our largest peanut-butter man" applies for membership. So does "our largest cold-cream man." Within a fortnight "our largest pig-iron man" follows suit. Glorious! Women come flocking, gowned "to kill." The Central is known among the "impossible" as "the Church of the Holy Cadillac." Before service and after, the avenue becomes a veritable Peacock Row.

Curiously, the staid, old-fashioned, solid element still adheres to the Central — those who have resisted the temptation to cut a dash, those who think the church has sold its birthright, even those who fought the "move" tooth and nail.

It is "a dreadful thing to break away from one's spiritual moorings, you know." One should stand by his church no matter what it does — not on the John Hancock principle of "We must all hang together or we shall all hang separately," but on the American bald eagle's principle of "My country, right or wrong!"

By inference, "My church, right or wrong!"

But suppose your church goes to the Old Harry. Have you got to go to the Old Harry along with

it? Here is a minister feeding his flock on enchanted sawdust. Here is a sheepfold overrun with goats. Here are Christians confessing that the Central's atmosphere chills them to the bone, sours them through and through, and starts feelings at once irreligious and immoral. Then why in the name of common decency and their souls' salvation don't they go where there's warmth and cleanliness and food for the spirit? They do the Central no good by staying, and they do themselves harm.

And in ways they have no right to. They half realize it. The same principle that forbids them to jeopardize their spiritual welfare by countenancing bad novels and bad plays, to the neglect and injury of good novels and good plays, "holds true," begging the pulpit-canary's pardon, "even in religion." Or rather, especially in religion. What virtue is there in supporting a ridiculous travesty of a church, when meanwhile you might be supporting a real church? Instead of a virtue, is it not rascality?

Secession would bear down hard on a good many clergymen. Some of them would have to peddle life-insurance, or write airy nothings for a livelihood, or go to teaching Moabite Semicolonology by way of unfitting young gentlemen for the ministry. Well, what of it? They had their chance. Why didn't they preach?

And it would jostle a good many churches. Doubtless! But would the churches care? Take the Central, for instance. If the Christians should leave, "exclusiveness" would reign supreme.

Membership in the Central would "stand for something." It would be a voucher for one's "social position." It would equal a paragraph in that proposed invaluable reference book, "The American Peerage."

Understand me, please. I admire loyalty. I admire organization. But when loyalty enables an organization to starve and freeze and tarnish immortal souls, I am for rebellion and the red flag. Nor am I thinking only of that banner's advantages as a relief from moral and spiritual mischief in churches domineered over by snobs. Plenty of others need the red flag—"dead" churches, I mean, and silly churches, and churches that ought never to have been started as there were twice too many before.

If quite a lot should perish, what harm? The Christians wouldn't. They would have fewer churches, but better and stronger and larger. There would be fewer preachers, but a survival of the fittest. Would this be a loss? Own up to it: there are mighty few preachers now.

Look them over, and see. You find excellent tradesmen spoiled to make abominable ministers. You find clergymen who would have shone in the law or in medicine. You find some who would flat out anywhere. Incompetents here and there, round pegs in square holes often. Why?

Simply because there are more churches (so-called) than real ministers. We keep saying that a minister must be an orator, a poet, a sage, a saint, and a potential novelist, and it is terribly near the

truth. But can't we see that orators are scarce, anywhere, and poets also, and that sages, saints, and potential novelists don't grow on every bush? Then why assume that a little Hebrew, a little study of extinct heresies, a casual grubbing among Greek roots, and a muddle of Comparative Religions, along with Moabite Semicolonology and a pabulum of spiritual Limburger, will turn out preachers by the thousand?

A lad ought to shake in his boots when he thinks of entering the ministry. Instead, it is the most accessible, the least exacting, and quite the safest of professions. He is teased into a seminary. He is subsidized while there. He is sure of a pulpit. Once in it, he can marry — in fact, must. And he can stay indefinitely, provided that he keeps straight and avoids "trouble." For he has allied himself with a calling where inefficiency lacks the concrete evidences that show.

If your lawyer is a quack, you get hanged. If your doctor is a quack, you die. If your tailor is a quack, you bag at the knees. If your dentist is a quack, his fillings come out. But if your minister is a quack, or lazy, or unspiritual, or soporific, or cold, or a round peg in a square hole, the case is not so simple. Where a doctor would lose patients and a lawyer clients, the minister "banks on loyalty," and the dear good souls who stand by him to the end are inclined to blame themselves and one another for the "lack of interest" at their church. They would gasp if you advised them to secede.

Whereas, when ministers learn to reckon with

secession as an ever-present peril and the sure consequence of feeding a flock on enchanted sawdust (and some not enchanted) we shall begin to have churches that count. Perhaps we shall even have a new denomination, founded by the "loyal," and christened the Rathergotosleepists.

You must not conclude, however, that I talked in this vein at Robertson Knight's, that evening he recounted the Central's history. I knew better. Besides, I wanted to avoid snap-judgment. I was unwilling to condemn the nabobs unheard, still more unwilling to condemn them unseen. Perhaps he was right enough in describing them as "good, bad, and indifferent, like the rest of the world," though I could not see exactly what business "the world" had inside the church of Christ. I surmised that it would be better for the church if "the world" would stay outside and persecute it — yes, and better for "the world," which might have assault and battery on its conscience in that case, but not poisoning.

I forget just how I put the matter to the Knights at the time, but the upshot was this:

The Central struck me as containing two churches — one Christian, the other not — and of these two the un-Christian church was the needier. I would stay. I would feed my sheep. God helping me, I would evangelize my goats.

And honestly, it seemed nothing so monstrously grotesque to set about evangelizing the goats. They were not born goats. Renegade sheep, I could call them. I did, and that was why I caught an

echo from the hymn a girl soloist used to sing at Northfield, years and years before. The look in her eyes came back, and the thrill in her voice, and the infinite pathos of the words,

"Away — on the mountains,
Wild — and bare;
Away — from the tender Shepherd's care,"

and then that last line repeated, with a change in the time, somehow doubling the emphasis and bringing a great, throbbing lump in my throat,

"Away from — the tender Shepherd's care."

In this spirit, I could begin my career as a "metropolitan divine" without censoriousness, without undue belligerency, and as Abraham Lincoln would have phrased it, "with charity for all, with malice toward none."

Why not? It would be Port William over again as concerned half my church. As concerned the other half — well, hadn't I come within one of signing the pledge at twilight on Round-top at Northfield and dedicating my life to the redemption of Hottentots? A trivial problem, the Hottentots. They have not preferred darkness to light. They never knew the light. But when people have seen light —

Dear, dear, I was missing the whole point again! These worldlings of mine had not seen the light, at least not for many a blue moon. They had seen Shelley and Keats, a little Ruskin, a little Steven-

son and a little warmed-over and grievously diluted Emersonian Transcendentalism. They needed Northfield. They needed the vigorous, indomitable faith of the Crusaders and the Rescue Mission. They needed the militant Christianity of the few dauntless believers out there in Sapphira. They needed lessons enough that Port William could teach them. For the first time in a decade, I felt that my whole experience, so far, was gathering its fragmentary episodes together and preparing to advance in massed formation.

We went home to our half-settled Parsonage in greatly improved spirits — still humble, it is true, but less discouraged, and with love and pity in our hearts instead of anger.

I can't speak for Gertrude, but I must add that in my own heart there was another feeling also — the sense of impending sacrifice. It gladdened me. It would be our destruction, preaching Christ in that church — yes, and our salvation.

We said our prayers together, Gertrude and I, and before I fell asleep that night, another hymn from Northfield began singing itself over in my memory.

“Jesus — Saviour! — pilot me!”

XIV

A "METROPOLITAN DIVINE"

SUNDAY came, and with it the full impact of being a "metropolitan divine." I recall a glitter of superb automobiles, then a great organ thundering an overture from some opera or other while I was getting into my gown in the ante-room. A moment later, out in the church, an impression of rippling ostrich plumes, incredibly expensive, and nodding flowers and ribbons and aigrettes.

The Central's own architect might have designed those hats. I thought of the minister who once began an onslaught on such vanities by announcing, "I shall preach from the last four syllables of the text, 'Let him that is upon the housetop not come down.'"

Thanks to that glimmer of fun, I managed to pull through the service despite its distressing incongruities.

After the overture, the quartette arose — not behind me, for the tall, carven archiepiscopal chair I occupied at that stage (or rather, on that stage) stood off at one side of the make-believe chancel. And yet, there in the very front of the church, behold! a soprano kidnapped from musical comedy, a contralto with a roof-garden on her head, a tenor who, if he had shut one eye, would have passed for

a needle, and a huge, fat, hulking bass, all bluster and braggadocio.

I haven't the faintest idea what they sang. A ballet from Verdi, Gertrude thinks, with sacred words. But what the words were, I could not discover. The "artists" seemed bent on disguising them—to make the "selection" sound more Italian, I guess.

After that, my own ballet set in. I trotted here, I trotted there, prayed an invocation in one corner, read a Psalm in another, sat down in three different chairs, and, as I had resolved not to alter the ceremonial that first Sunday, observed all the strange little comings and goings and bobbings up and down prescribed by the "order of service" my predecessor had left me.

I was reminded of the well-known hod-carrier who remarked, "For a nice, clain, aisy job, I wud like to be a Bishop," and thought what a fool that hod-carrier was. Nice and "clain" the Bishop's job might be, yet not by any means "aisy."

A year or so more, and my predecessor would have had candles on the "altar" and small boys in red running all around his "chancel," and himself in full canonicals. But even then it would have been a poor imitation, and calculated to rouse a Bishop to spasms of profoundly unecclesiastical mirth.

For, yonder would have loomed the choir in their street clothes. The congregation would have remained seated in prayer-time. There would have been no "responses." In a word, the service would

have had a mongrel air, "neither flesh, fish, fowl, nor good red-herring."

Chesterton has cleared that point. "Give the King a crown, but don't give him half-a-crown."

Here I suppose some Bishop will accuse me of having straddled the issue back there in Port William by wearing a gown and still refusing to go in for the full length Episcopal ritual. If so, I agree to box that Bishop. Far from symbolizing Apostolic Succession, my gown marked me as continuing an ancient Puritan custom. It belonged with the Puritan service. The whole thing was congruous and consistent, like thousands of other Evangelical services, the country over. I wanted to return to it now.

But while this present strange ceremonial I was a part of grated on taste and on my sense of religious decorum, it kept me thinking of myself when, instead, I ought to have been free to study the people I was about to address. To be sure, I saw them during the hymns and choral numbers, how could I help seeing them? I even saw them as I glanced up from the great Bible on the lectern. I remember seeing Gertrude, and how like a brown thrush among birds-of-paradise she looked. I remembered seeing Ned (formerly Neddie Boy) and my daughters. I remember the Knights, down in the third row. But I was worried and confused by the ritual. I failed to get it through my head who the people were that had so crowded the church. Strangers, attracted by curiosity and my picture in the papers? Nabobs who had motored in from

Dreamwold, Idlewild, Lullaby Lake, and their splendid country-houses? My own parishioners, welcoming the ride on a fine morning and rather interested in their new pastor? The solid, serious, Christian element—"salt of the earth," as Robertson Knight had put it? I felt I ought to know definitely, for it would make a difference with the sermon, as I was to preach without notes.

All the satisfaction I got was noticing that when I stood up and had a view of the whole congregation, the monstrous hats seemed less numerous.

I said to myself, "Go ahead, just as you have planned. It's a sermon that ought to reach everybody." And honestly, I think it was.

I took for my text the words, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee." The theme was, "What if you should die to-night?"

I didn't make a scare of it—at least, not in the ordinary sense. I passed over that, and began by showing the abysmal solemnity of the words from the Saviour's standpoint. Having humbled Himself to be born in the image of mortality, what must have been His terror lest some premature tragedy might end His mission on earth before it had accomplished its Divine purpose?

Oh, the pang in that ever-present possibility! Not to drip bloody sweat in the garden, after all! Not to be hooted and spat upon! Not to wear the contemptuous mock-crown! Not to be nailed through hands and feet and lifted up on the hilltop between two scoundrels!

While I was speaking, I looked up and saw the

candy-pink caricature of Jesus in stained glass, and anger surged within me. I burst out about Mariolatry. I said the world had substituted a bearded Madonna for Jesus — that this was why it could think of Him as a myth apart, and sentimentalize over His gospel without dreaming of applying it.

There is a singular magic in words. Mariolatry! Myth! Sentimentalism! They were not words commonly used in sermons. So much the better. They hit hard. I knew by a kind of stir among the people. Or were they only thinking, "The new minister is 'sensational'!"

Well, what if I *was* sensational? So was Calvary. So is the gospel. So are its fruits — when men believe, and repent in anguish, and have their lives smashed in pieces, and rebuilt from the bottom up.

Instead of a candy-pink caricature, I preached the Hero Christ, murdered, and risen, and sitting at the right hand of God. And then I passed to the application.

Suppose that "this night thy soul should be required of thee." What was your soul? An imaginary transparent globule? Most people think of it that way. I said your soul was your *self*, and asked what sort of selves those people thought they had. Strip away social position, banish wealth, discard fine houses and glittering automobiles and all that, and what would be left? Honesty? Modesty? Purity? Kindness? Forgiveness? Sacrifice? The love without which all else is as sound-

ing brass? A devoutness that can read without a tremor those words of Jesus, "He that will save his life shall lose it"?

What if, when its outward dignity was shorn off, there should cower forth a self crippled and deformed and stunted — ashamed in its Maker's presence?

And it was no distant disgrace, either. Perchance it was here already. No chance to say, "All's well till Judgment Day." Judgment Day was now. Realities did the judging. The danger was not that your soul would be required of you to-night. The danger was that the self you were would live on, years and years, getting more crippled, more stunted, more deformed. And then — what? Anything left worthy to escape being snuffed out? Anything left worthy to escape an awful retribution? Anything left with the barest possibility of retribution's redeeming it? Talk about the Larger Hope and Restorationism! Who in his senses would face the risks?

It was a terrible sermon. Hell — new style. But it ended with a call — half-desperate, half-expectant — of "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!"

And now I suppose you are asking what came of that sermon. Results?

Well, no minister ever knows exactly what comes of a sermon. But, considering the things that got said to Gertrude after service, it seemed to me that instead of achieving results, I had merely achieved an effect.

Mrs. Edgar Williams said I was "splendid — almost like Oberammergau."

Miss Ainsworth said I was "so simple and primitive," reminding her of "those darling Fra Angelicos in the National Gallery."

Mrs. Ellis said I "ought to write plays," I had "such a wonderful imagination."

My own people! For, although "everybody was out of town," few had gone far. Life was too gay at Dreamwold and Lullaby Lake.

But I must add what Robertson Knight said. "Gertrude, my child, tell your Jim that if he'd preached like that in Sapphira, I'd have worked with a pick to earn money to help keep him there."

These were the things Gertrude heard while I was on my knees in the ante-room, and presently I heard some things, myself, for when I went out into the church after shedding my gown, my new parishioners crowded around me. There were congratulations from those who "did enjoy it so," invitations here, there, and everywhere, and polite inquiries as to whether it would "bother" us if people dropped in for half a minute at the Parsonage.

Little by little, the groups melted away, and then I caught sight of a temptress, laying for me.

One glance told me she was a temptress. She had it in her eye. And when she insisted on rounding up Gertrude and the youngsters and loading us all into her Pierce Arrow, to drag us off to her "camp" (meaning a kind of *hotel-de-ville*) for a Sunday dinner at Lullaby, I knew she had a pet project up

her sleeve. Women with pet projects always collar the new parson first thing.

The temptress I speak of was the eminent Mrs. Frank Ellingwood Sears, and the pet scheme Psychotherapy. She wanted our church made over into a clinic.

I had heard of Mrs. Sears. Mr. Knight had called her a born leader, and now I wondered why, for during the ride she harked back to my sermon, and declared that "Forbes-Robertson himself couldn't have 'got it over' with a surer touch." A leader—and no more tact than that! I concluded that leadership, in her case, consisted in foreseeing the social cat's next jump and getting in front of it quick. As concerned Psychotherapy, social cats were jumping that way in a dozen cities. Boston's social cat had begun it. Chicago's had followed. Even San Francisco's was bunching its paws. Here in town, Mrs. Sears had only to anticipate the inevitable.

She was well prepared, moreover, having lately returned from a fortnight's investigation of Back Bay Psychotherapy as championed by Drs. Worcester and McComb at Emmanuel.

Knowing me as you do, you are not expecting me to say that an afternoon at Lullaby won me over to the idea of transforming the Central into a pilgrimage church for neurasthenics. It was a beautiful plan—the mere humanitarian part. Besides, I agreed with Mrs. Sears that to some slight extent Psychotherapy might head off Christian Science. What I balked at was connecting Psy-

chotherapy with a church, turning "healer" myself, and stealing time and strength from my ministerial duties in order to attempt the unauthorized, and perhaps dangerous, practise of medicine, for that was what the drugless treatment amounted to.

Why is there always some other thing for the church to save its neck by instead of its ancient and undying privilege of addressing the individual conscience in the name of a personal God?

I can remember the days when "everything depended" on proving "the harmony of Science and Religion." Ministers dropped their work and went to studying geology. One I could name devoted a lot of genius to inventing science that would "harmonize." If people said the whale could not have swallowed Jonah, he "reported" a whale "recently cast up on the shores of Norway" with a gullet big enough to "accommodate a man on horseback without blinking." I even knew a minister who set about breeding mules in his own barn, so as to demonstrate the sterility of hybrids and floor Darwin.

Later on, "everything depended" on getting in line with the Labor Movement. Preachers advertised sermons to workingmen. When the workingmen came, they gave them lectures on the Labor Movement, and were astonished that they never came back. Why should they? They knew all that before.

Next, "everything depended" on "redeeming society." We must preach a "social gospel." Although Jesus said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you," and declared it fruitless to cry, "Lo,

here!" and "Lo, there!" we were to transform nations in a sermon or two and make a temporal Kingdom of Heaven on earth. The ideal minister was to be a sociologist, an economist, an expert in the science of government, and a publicist into the bargain.

Not one syllable by way of disparaging the inspiration behind all this. It was magnificent. But what folly to think of gaining any such results through the pulpit! The pulpit has walls around it and a pretty restricted fraction of the public inside the walls. To reach the public, get out of the pulpit and into *Everybody's Magazine* or *Collier's* or the *New York Times*. That works. If it doesn't, the pulpit won't, and you will have failed to use your pulpit for the one thing it is fitted to accomplish. You make an awful flunk of preaching to a planet that is not among those present and overlooking Susie Green and Bill Jones who are.

The question a minister ought to ask, when he has finished preparing a sermon, is not, "Will this renovate the solar system?" Instead, he ought to ask, "Will Susie Green see God?" and "Will Bill Jones keep straight?"

What moral and spiritual boost does a man expect Bill and Susie to derive from an arraignment of that terrible bandersnatch, the "existing social order"? What conceivable profit to Bill and Susie — morally, spiritually, humanly — if they listen to criticisms of municipal abuses, of "frenzied finance," of the wage-system, of capital, of trusts, and all those monstrosities? And where, except in

church, is any one going to attack their individual consciences in the name of a personal God? The home no longer does it. The schools don't dare. It is not in the magazines and newspapers, whereas discussions of public questions are, and often based on a much better understanding of them than a minister can command.

But is it true, really, that the paramount issues are social issues? Sometimes I think that the paramount issues are individual issues. What ails America? American character, it seems to me — the character that cannot get on with its wife, or bring up its children, or keep its servants, or deal squarely in business, or obey the government it has made, or live within its means, or replace rickety bridges till after the wreck, or adopt safety-devices in its mills till somebody comes along with a thundering big stick and makes it. The products of such character are social; granted; but the causes are individual. So let me quote you a text from George Ade: "When uplifting, get underneath."

Now, while Mrs. Sears's proposal to plunge us up to our eyes in Psychotherapy struck me as but another of these quaint projects to substitute something else for our proper work, I must admit that the new healing was sufficiently individual.

Also that it had some fairly direct connection with preaching. What good is preaching unless it gets put in practice, and how is it going to get put in practice by nervous wrecks? "Nerves" make temper, temper unmakes Christianity. "Nerves" make morbidness, intense self-centeredness, and

general futility — all of which are un-Christian. But why need “nerves” be cured by reverend green-horns when plenty of qualified specialists are curing them by the carload already?

Then, too, there was that argument about stealing the Christian Scientists’ thunder. Something in it, doubtless, and yet, when I took to stealing the big Unitarian’s thunder out in Sapphira, you know how it ended.

My gravest objection, however, was a dread lest turning the Central into a sanctified Battle Creek for the fidgety would shoo away well folks. “Going to church to-day?” “No, I’m feeling first-rate, thank you.”

All in all, I decided to applaud Psychotherapy and “let George do it.”

I wish, now, that I had told Mrs. Sears my decision then and there, instead of “winking with the eye” and promising to give her plan my earnest consideration, though I kept my promise, and that led me into reading several Psychotherapeutic books that have been of use to me since — one by Prof. Paul Dubois in particular. I valued them for the light they shed on sane — i.e., Christian — living.

But you cannot shilly-shally with a “leader” like Mrs. Frank Ellingwood Sears. Nor can you thwart such a woman without incurring the need of Psychotherapeutic “first aid,” yourself.

Which, however, is another story. All in good time — or bad!

XV

TINDER

THIS will be a funny chapter — funny, that is, in the sense in which my girls use the word. Not humorous; don't expect that. By funny, I mean "odd" and perhaps "foolish," for I am going to risk some guesses about my aristocrats and their motives. If humor creeps in, it will be unconscious humor, the result of distorted impressions. Laugh, if you like, but give me credit for candor. I shall not spare myself. Perhaps I shall hold myself up to ridicule, instead of the aristocrats. I am perfectly aware of this, for I can't say that I understood them.

One is never quite sure of other folks' motives, and least of all when they have had "the best social training." There are hints of artificiality in their manner. They have put on "charm" and simulated cordiality at teas and receptions and dinner parties till it has become second nature. They can't help it now. But, while it is a pleasant, well-meaning artificiality, it somehow makes you just a trifle uncertain as to their sincerity when they are in earnest.

I speak of this because Gertrude and I kept wondering how our great folks regarded us. As picturesque peasants?

Well, weren't we that? Nothing in Port William or Sapphira had tended to prepare us for this "metropolitan" existence, sophisticated though Port William and Sapphira had been in their way. We were small-town types, both of us. We lacked "distinction."

Personally, if I thought I had any "distinction," I'd take something for it, and the thing I prized most in Gertrude was her frank, open-hearted, unassuming sweetness; I felt it was bound to "go" even here, and at first it seemed to. When the schools re-opened and families began pouring back into the city, she was courted and petted and kept on the jump. To a shocking extent, I was.

And yet it was a futile popularity we had. A picturesque peasant, with the right stuff in him, might have got at the hearts of those aristocrats, somehow — that is, if they in their turn had had the right stuff in them. I don't quite think all of them did. Nor could I make out exactly what it was they lacked. They were not stiff; on the contrary, they were appallingly graceful. And it would have been absurd to call them distant. They snatched at us.

But I never felt that I knew them, or that they were particularly anxious that I should. All my old diplomacy failed. All Gertrude's failed. Yes, even when we asked about their children! They would respond smilingly enough, yet almost as if acknowledging a courtesy. When we begged to see the children, down the precious creatures were fetched by their nurses and governesses, exhibited

in an apologetic sort of way, and led back upstairs against our protests when the little show was over. One day Gertrude said, "Sometimes I think these people are too polite ever to mention anything they care about."

Instead they would chatter volubly about Mr. Bernard Shaw and his farces, or about "Fra Elbertus," who "was radical of course" but "said just what he thought," or about Cadillacs and Pierce Arrows, or golf, or the last new Cunarder they had experienced, or some incredibly gay hotel at Biarritz. Forgive me if I am caricaturing the chatter; most of it went out of my head.

We took up golf that Fall, hoping to get honestly acquainted on the links. No go! We fozzled our approach, literally and metaphorically, and quit.

They were not square with us, those *nouveaux riches*. They always kept something back, or seemed to. Must we conclude that, really, they possessed no other interests than those we saw? You know what Mr. Price Collier suspected about the "profoundly mysterious" Hindu mind — namely, that what had passed for profundity was only a great emptiness. I was unwilling to apply that theory to these people's hearts.

Instead, I wondered if my onslaughts on worldliness, Sunday after Sunday, had not made them a little wary, a little touchy, a little afraid that if I got to know them as they knew themselves I should come on something abhorrent.

But if this were their mood, why was I so popular? Sometimes it appeared to me that I was in

the position of a court-chaplain, whose liege-lord relished a drubbing because it seemed to yield a kind of absolution after penance. My worldlings would face the music, wince under it, and go away with a serene, if but half-formed, conviction that settled it. They were not vexed with me, they were vaguely grateful.

There was a challenge in this. The more serene they were and the more they blocked me off with their nice, polite thus-far-and-no-furtherings, the more determined I was to "buck through." The chance would come sooner or later, I thought. Wait till Miss Tarbell wrote up Bradley Dearborn and pulled down the heavens. Wait till Charles W. Holworthy intercepted a telephone message from Diamond Dizzydale, "chorus-lady," for his son and heir. Wait till somebody lay sick unto death. Then we should see.

And meanwhile we saw that these were excellent people in a hundred ways. When I asked for automobiles to provide an outing for the little cripples at the State Hospital School, I got rather too many. Not spare cars, either. They came in threes and fours, and aristocrats walked in consequence. When I wanted five thousand dollars for a "poor white" college in Alabama, it was like picking it off Gertrude's rubber plant. I was sorry I had not demanded fifty thousand.

And oh, the passionate, keen interest in the church! That is, according to their "lights." They wanted it to "draw." What would I say to a vested choir? Didn't I think a Romanesque

porch across the front would be a hit? And what could we do to squelch "the First," another of those runaways from downtown that were "invading our territory"?

Turn this enthusiasm in the right direction, and it would work wonders.

I was not in despair about that. Certainly the case looked far from hopeless when something like half my parish was Christian already. I knew, for I was getting acquainted with the staid, old-fashioned, salt-of-the-earth families Robertson Knight had belauded so warmly. Money had not cheapened them. Paradoxical though it sounds, money had enriched them. They stood on top of their possessions, and were the better for them. Wealth humbles people of that stamp because they are conscious of its responsibilities.

My life among those dear, simple-hearted, moneyed Christians was a continual delight. They were magnificent at our midweek forum, and a living force in the Sunday School. And you should have heard them storm and fume when they spoke of the Central's flight from "the land of Egypt"! Running away from souls and running after dollars — how it rankled!

I was careful not to lead them on. I took it that the milk had been spilt. Too late, now. And yet while I avoided leading them on, as it seemed like inflaming one faction against the other, I was all the while being led on, myself. A little more and I should be "saying things."

How far I was being led, I failed to realize — till

one day I came up to the edge, and slipped over. This was how:

A Mrs. Gilder — I call her “a” Mrs. Gilder because she refused to be “prominent,” despite her wealth — got me “going” by a rather exceptionally vehement scold about the “move,” and I was rash enough to tell her of our visit to the corner of Livingston and Green Streets. I didn’t rant. I didn’t talk of “burning shames.” I even held in about the lithograph of the woman undressing in a trapeze outside the “garden theater” that had once been Mrs. Gilder’s “church home.” But I could not hold in about the poor harlot who “might have been baptized there,” as Gertrude had said, “into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

This was “saying things” with a vengeance, but I was not prepared for the outburst it caused. Mrs. Gilder turned crimson, and exclaimed, hotly, “It’s atrocious — perfectly outrageous! It’s —” and gasped for breath.

For half a second, I thought she meant Gertrude’s idea.

Not much. For now she was saying, impulsively, “Would you remember the girl if you should see her again?”

At that, I felt a blush way up to the roots of my hair. Why had we let the poor thing slip through our fingers? Had *we* “moved,” too? Was I nothing but a kid-gloved “metropolitan divine” after all?

“I’ll tell you what!” Mrs. Gilder went on, with-

out waiting for me to reply. "You find the girl, and I'll see she's taken care of."

I had to confess that I didn't think I should know her if I met her face to face. Still, Gertrude might; I would tell Gertrude, though it would be like looking for a needle in a haystack, and probably a most doggedly elusive and rebellious needle at that.

But you don't have to retain a conscious recollection of a face in order to know it again. I know Lydia's step on the stairs, and never mistake it for Frances's, though for the life of me I can't call it to mind when it is not there. And it was a thoroughly philosophic small boy who was asked if he knew the Ten Commandments and said he did, and when he flunked on being told to repeat them, declared, "I know 'em when I hear 'em." Was it not possible, then — not probable of course or anything like it, but possible — that I might know that wreck of a girl if I saw her?

It didn't depend on that possibility alone, though. There was Gertrude. Gertrude said, "Why, I'm surprised you don't remember! She was a slender little thing — about eighteen, I should guess — with dark hair and a tiny white scar across one eyebrow. I can see her now."

Then began our prowls through Livingston Street.

If they had had no other object than a search for a depraved needle in a soiled haystack, they would have been discouraging enough, I admit. But the truth was, we were studying the neighborhood.

The Central could still make some feeble amends for the "move." Why not a mission chapel? Or why not a settlement? Or why not both?

As for our ever tracing the wayward girl, the more we thought of it, the less we thought of it. Even if she were not in jail or the morgue by this, there had been nothing to prove that Livingston Street was her customary promenade. Weeks passed, and though we visited the district repeatedly, sometimes by day, oftener after dark, we failed to meet her. After a while we concluded we never should.

At this distance, it beats me to understand how I got the leisure for those prowls. Being a "metropolitan divine" was enough to drive a man frantic. To say nothing of my normal duties, overwhelming though they were and subject to interruption by innumerable cranks, book-agents, swindlers, humbugs, promoters, "reformers," and confirmed ho-boes, I was asked to embellish all sorts of occasions with my august presence and "a few remarks." I sat on platforms. I made after-dinner speeches. I gave "talks." People I had never heard of wanted me to "solemnize their union." And there was no refusing when entire outsiders came to me with blood-shot eyes and said wouldn't I officiate at funerals? Of course I would. Who wouldn't have? I sometimes hear of ministers declining academic degrees or college presidencies, but I have yet to hear of one who was not ready at any moment to go and stand beside an open grave—a

washer-woman's, it might be, or a criminal's, or a suicide's.

Fortunately I had outgrown my dependence on manuscript, so my sermons were composed in trolley-cars, chiefly. That was the safest place; my study (with its telephone) the riskiest. I was sure to be called up, if only by the great Mrs. Sears, who kept at me about Psychotherapy till I ached.

Psychotherapy! I was in need of Psychotherapy myself — except that I doubted if even auto-suggestions could quiet my nerves with that charming but importunate meddler on my trail. As the weeks went by, she grew appreciably less charming and more and more importunate. Also critical. When a faint ripple of dissatisfaction followed my efforts to simplify the church service, it was she who started the ripple. One day I heard that she was "after me" on doctrinal points. Funny, for if ever there had been recklessly "practical" sermons, untechnical and oblivious of dogma, mine had been, so far. I rather thought somebody was mistaken about Mrs. Sears, that time, though I realized perfectly that she was not in an amiable mood. A church hath no fury like — but, dear me! who says I scorned the woman? Nonsense! I simply sneaked out of bestriding her pet hobby. I had excuse enough apart from my convictions, for I was already in the predicament of an insanely over-ambitious circus-actor trying to ride nine-and-sixty nags at once.

But there was a thing I needed vastly more than

auto-suggestion. Help, help! Quick, brethren, an assistant-pastor!

Several of my parishioners had hinted at that, and I began to cast about for some likely young fellow who would ride—say fifty-odd nags—while I rode the rest. But I encountered a pretty baffling poser as concerned the young fellow—namely, his non-existence. Such a man as I wanted had a parish of his own and could not be expected to give it up. The worst poser, however, confronted me when I asked what I could let my assistant-pastor do. Oh! of course, he could sit on the platforms, spout at banquets, make speeches at clubs and all that. He could have Mrs. Sears, and welcome. Yet when it came to his robbing me of one single chance to preach or of even a small part of the house-to-house visitation that was essential to the making of my sermons, how could I consent? Impossible! The situation was vastly too serious.

Are you wondering why my predecessor had not had an assistant? I hate to tell you, and I feel like a knave (hist, conspiracy!) when I declare that, as a matter of sober, solemn, disgraceful fact, he was afraid to. Altogether too much risk of being outshone.

Was that my own motive, subcutaneously and without my acknowledging it even to myself? If it was, may I never laugh again! Anybody who could have outshone me would have won my everlasting gratitude—that is, if the outshining had meant a straighter gospel and an effectual tackling of moral issues. I could then have resigned, with

a clear conscience. I wanted a decent way out, for neither Gertrude nor I believed we could stay very long. The Central was a house divided against itself and filled with tinder — mysterious tinder, tinder I could not account for, except as concerned Mrs. Sears. The truth was, I did not understand worldliness, nor do I think I understand it now. What I did understand was that, in the case of fully half my parishioners, I had failed to “get hold.” That spells danger, always. It spells it in italics if a “split” is brewing, in whacking big scare-head capitals if you are preaching the morality of the Nazarene to people whose ideals are transplanted from Biarritz, Deauville and the Champs-Élysées.

For a time, it is all very well, being a picturesque peasant or a court-chaplain. New brooms sweep clean. Later — look out! Something may “happen.”

It was a small thing, relatively, that “happened” first. One evening along in November, when Capt. Michael Lafferty of the Eighth Precinct had agreed to talk over conditions in the district, I went down to Livingston Street alone, reaching the police-station at about eight.

We chatted for at least an hour, and it was on the whole an encouraging view of things I got from the Captain. He said the neighborhood had been maligned; that it contained irresponsibles enough, to be sure, but that they had good stuff in them and rarely gave trouble. He thought, however, that they were under deplorably harmful influences,

mainly because of Flinn's Garden Theater, which attracted all manner of scalawags from outside. Bounce Flinn, and the district would pick up. Why didn't I do it?

I said, "Why don't I bounce Beelzebub?"

The Captain laughed, but went on, perfectly seriously. "Flinn isn't doing well. He admits it. He tells me 'burlesque' is 'on the blink,' with expenses running up for bigger companies every year, and the same old prices at the door. He'd unload, easy. Just you drop in on him as you go by, and see if that ain't so. Ask him his figure. It'll surprise you folks."

I confess that I could hardly see myself "dropping in" at the Garden Theater, and yet I thanked Lafferty for the suggestion as to "bouncing" its proprietor. It seemed fairly practical. If I could obtain any sum I demanded for a "poor white" college my people had never seen and in which they had no personal concern whatever, surely some one would back me up in an effort to wipe out the institution that was a standing and glaringly sensational disgrace to our church. Supposing it took quite a sum, what of that? The building could be made over into some respectable sort of place and disposed of without loss — perhaps at a profit, who knew?

As I approached the Garden Theater on my way home that evening, I thought what an awfully droll experience it would be to march up to the box-office, demand an interview with Brother Flinn, and offer to buy him out. If I had not been a clergyman, I

almost believe I should have risked it. The temptation was pretty strong.

I glanced in through the old-fashioned Norman entrance. There was the box-office man, visible through a pane of plate glass with a round hole in it. I hesitated. And at that moment a door burst open, and two ushers in crimson uniforms rushed out, dragging a girl with them. In the glare of the arc-lights, I recognized her instantly, although she was drunk, and had her giddy hat down over one ear, while her hair was all tousled and her face a perfect gargoyle of rage. The tiny white scar across one eyebrow showed I had made no mistake.

I will say this much for the ushers: they were as gentle as could be expected. They carried her across the street, straightened her hat, and I even think they attempted some bungling apology or other before they left her leaning against a gate, and went back into the theater.

I crossed over, and what followed was enough to make a novelist tear his hair out.

Oh! the wasted "opportunities"; whereas, any able-bodied yarn-spinner would have seen the start of a tip-top melodrama—red fire, creepy-creepy music, yells of excitement from the very gallery gods! Think of it—a "metropolitan divine," alone, in a disreputable street and at night, getting entangled with a drunken harlot! Lovely! Soon enough, it would smash his reputation to atoms.

Or, if he escaped that, what a chance for him to save her from herself and insist on her being received into membership at the Church of St. Crœ-

sus! For, of course, it would turn out that she was the daughter of one of its deceased deacons, to whom, by the way, a memorial window had been dedicated just over the "altar."

I am not in the yarn-spinning business, however. Too bad! I can only go on in my prosy, factual way and tell the story as it stands.

As I was saying, I crossed over, expecting a first-class pitched battle. You can't walk up to a tipsy harridan, say you are a minister, explain about a dear, philanthropic, religious woman uptown, and look for success — that is, not ordinarily. She will "hand you a few hot ones."

But the girl was not only drunk. Her hand went to her side — the left side — and she was groaning when I reached her and unable to stand alone. The fight was all gone out of her, and most of the life. She neither cared who I was nor what I meant to do. She kept groaning and muttering to herself, and even when I called a boy from half a block away and bribed him to run to a corner drug-store and telephone for a cab, she never protested. Perhaps it was because she had been kicked about and trampled on and carried off, this way and that, till it seemed but another chapter in the same old story. And perhaps she thought she was dying, so that nothing mattered any more.

For that was the truth, except about its not mattering. She lasted three weeks.

I could break your heart with an account of those three weeks at Mrs. Gilder's, but I don't quite think I ought to. There were horrible moments when

Maggie was delirious and cried out for her dead mother in language strewn with obscenities. There were moments when she cursed Mrs. Gilder, and more than a few when she cursed Gertrude and the trained nurse and the doctor and me. There were moments when she saw Hell. And there were moments when Scripture texts mingled with her babblings — Sunday School coming back.

Then, one morning I shall never forget, the change came. Say all you like about the futility of death-bed conversions. This was real. And she didn't know she was going to die, she thought she was going to get well.

One day, she made me help her remember a Bible hymn she used to sing:

“Though your sins — be as scarlet,
They shall be — as white as snow.”

Little came out regarding her history. We wanted her to put all that behind her, and she tried. But not about her father. She wanted him to come. We telegraphed — only to learn by a delayed answer that he had died two years before. We never told Maggie. To the end, she believed he was on the way.

Perhaps it was the illness more than the inner change that accounted for it, but, before the end of the second week, I could glance from Maggie's face to Gertrude's and then back to Maggie's and defy anybody to guess that our patient had ever been a girl of the streets or anything but good all her life.

Naturally, we kept the worst of the story from the children. It was easy enough, for they had seen us go and stay with sick people many a time. But for some reason — our looks, probably — they took a special interest in this case, Frances, particularly.

I was sitting next Maggie's bed, one afternoon toward the end, when some one tapped timidly at the door. The nurse opened it, and I heard a whisper.

"Yes, it's all right," I heard her say; "come in. Your father's here."

And there was Frances, with a big bunch of lovely flowers for Maggie.

Poor Maggie! The tears streamed down her cheeks. Another girl! Not despising her! Bringing her flowers!

Afterward, Frances asked me why I cried so, and I took her in my arms, and kissed her brow, and cried again, and said it was because I loved her and she was a treasure.

I ache when I write of this. As for telling of Maggie's funeral, I can't and won't — except to tell the hymn we sang (or tried to, half-choking) —

"Though your sins — be as scarlet,
They shall be — as white as snow."

But what had been going on among my aristocrats all this while? And where was the great Mrs. Sears?

She had a fairly logical case against me now, I

must admit. Why had I argued that I could not shoulder Psychotherapy on top of my other responsibilities, when, any moment, I was prepared to drop them in order to "dance attendance on a sick street-walker"? What was I turning the Central into? It couldn't be a clinic, but, "next you knew, it would be a Magdalens' Home."

If Mrs. Sears had stopped there, she might have started quite a rumpus, not wholly without some shadow of excuse. For three weeks at a stretch, I had neglected my sermons, gone half-prepared to the midweek forum, shirked sitting on platforms, quit calling, refused to address the Civic Union, let a spat in the choir go unnoticed, and absented myself from four "highly important" receptions.

But Mrs. Sears was too energetic by far. In her enthusiasm, she said I was attacking an evil as old as the world, and people could answer, "Well, so is murder." She said I had no business in Livingston Street, anyhow; that it was disgraceful; think of a metropolitan divine riding around at night, alone with a drunken prostitute! She even went the length of hinting, albeit vaguely, that I had relished picking up a strumpet kicked out of what had once been the Central Church. It was a dig at the "move," she implied. I was "rubbing it in."

Mighty poor tactics, these! They reacted. And, to be entirely frank, I don't believe even the aristocrats could have been roused to any very rebellious state of mind by Mrs. Sears's little campaign, if she had kept within the bounds of reason. They were

on my side, and felt that I was on theirs. If Maggie had come to grief at the old Central, hadn't she fallen into the hands of the new Central's minister, and hadn't he done his plain duty? Instead of "rubbing it in," why not say he had tried his best to make amends for the "move"? Bravo!

But when Mrs. Sears bowed herself out of the Central Church a week later and went over to "the First," taking along the Brainards, the Whites, and the "Tommy" Blounts — relatives of hers and therefore manageable — I heard no more bravos.

Some said "Good riddance!" and I think they meant it so far as Mrs. Sears was concerned. Yet they were sorry to lose the others, and so was I. It scared me. I wondered if this were not a premonitory sputter indicating that worse was in store.

After one such experience, it would be anxious business, presiding over a house divided against itself and filled with tinder. I was not much surprised when the eminent Mrs. Wentworth who had engineered my call drew me aside one day and said, "Now I don't want to criticize or anything of that sort, but doesn't it seem to you that we ought to be just a little bit more — oh! I don't mean cautious — I despise caution — but, well, diplomatic?"

However, Robertson Knight said, "Good boy! Fight it out!"

XVI

SMOLDERING

THE following week we had a social — so called. It made me want to be a Socialist. For it had a flavor of “society” about it, and was to that extent outrageously unsociable.

Thorpe did better — oh, any amount better! The women folks stood up in the middle of the room and screamed one another black in the face. The little folks raced round and round the women folks, laughing and shouting. The men folks sat it out glumly, self-condemned wall-flowers.

Sapphira did infinitely better. Our social was a muster of the brave. We were huge friends, all of us, because comrades in arms, fighting the good fight of faith in the enemy’s country. And as for Port William, its socials were parties to look forward to. Democracy reigned, with jollity for his queen.

But this dreadful “metropolitan” catastrophe — why, honestly, my boy Ned did it full justice when he muttered to me in the midst of the proceedings (I had almost said “obsequies”), “Kill it! Don’t let it suffer!”

It had an atmosphere of universal stand-offishness — swells afraid of one another and scared

simply blue because among those present there were non-swells who, if given an inch, might take a mile.

I am not exaggerating. I am not caricaturing the situation. Nobody could. I am viewing it as Mrs. Gilder did — and Robertson Knight. They have seen many a social at the Central Church and were of the opinion that the time had come to abolish the travesty of good-fellowship, root and branch. I shared their conviction. Where people are “exclusive” on principle and as a matter of taste and through fear, you can’t expect them to “get in with the wrong set” at a social. They won’t risk it. Or if they do, they will make up for it by a generous distribution of snubs next day. Verbum sap.

But I am far from declaring that I suffered boredom that evening. Whether as a picturesque peasant or as a court chaplain hardly matters; I was secure in my position; and so was Gertrude. The “best people” petted us, the infinitely better people treated us like dear friends. Moreover, I experienced thrills — in fact, two separate and distinct thrills, though proceeding from the same dynamo, and, as I almost thought, along wires that connected.

Early in the evening, Ex-Senator Hornby remarked, “I hear that old Barclay Adams is coming to church next Sunday with the idea of joining us if he likes the minister.”

“Yes?” said I, well knowing what was to follow the remark, and wanting it over.

"Well," the Ex-Senator proceeded, a trifle embarrassed, "you see, Adams is sensitive. Not sore, exactly, but —"

I interrupted. "You mean he wouldn't relish a sermon like last Sunday's?"

"Now don't misunderstand me," the politician protested. "I don't mean to criticize. For my own part, I thought you handled a delicate subject remarkably well. It was inspiring. I like to hear a man preach idealism, even if it isn't practical. I don't know as idealism ever is."

Idealism! It had been a sermon from the text, "Thou shalt not steal." I had said that living beyond one's means was stealing; that voting for known plunderers was stealing; that giving short weight was stealing; that tax-dodging was stealing; that backing a dishonest corporation by investing in it was stealing. Moral: If your business is dishonest, chuck it; if a part of your business is dishonest, chuck that. And if your little personal maneuvers are dishonest, see that you quit them.

I suppose it was my open-mouthed astonishment that made the Ex-Senator go a step beyond his original intention. "Don't misunderstand me," he repeated. "I like idealism in a minister, and everything you said last Sunday was proper enough from the ministerial point of view. But we business men aren't ministers, and business isn't religion. It's war. Religion has nothing to do with it. If you were in business, you would understand."

Happily, the Dixons joined us just then, or I rather guess I should have "said things."

Later on, came thrill number two. Miss Angie Packard cornered me by a shrewd move, and began about Mrs. Buckminster's wedding. "I've persuaded her to be married in church," she said, "and won't it be just great? 'The First' never had a wedding like that. They'll be simply green with envy."

This time, I was in first-class fighting trim, and came within one of letting Angie "have it" red-hot. What I all but blurted out was, "I wouldn't marry Mrs. Buckminster to Count Boni de Castellane in Flinn's Garden Theater—let alone a church. If somebody's got to do it, ask the coroner."

It was a clear case. Her first husband had left her and thrown himself off a steamer in mid-Atlantic. People thought they knew why. She had got a divorce from "Tad" Buckminster on the flimsiest grounds—"cruel and abusive treatment," whereas a kinder, gentler, more chivalrous fellow than "Tad" never breathed. And now she had taken up with a young dukeling of the Newport stamp, eight years her junior, because she "needed the money."

Some day we shall provide titles for our duke-lings, and yet we get on surprisingly well without. I suppose Angie was looking forward to one of those fine "ducal" riots they have from time to time in New York—a mob of alleged society people storming the church, slugging women in

their scramble for places, and destroying property by way of garnering "souvenirs." Splendid! A great "card" for the Central, especially as the dukeling's private history outdid Mrs. Buckminster's.

Somehow, I kept my temper and told Angie Packard I should be happy to talk things over with the lady — which was true. I should have relished nothing better, though I knew that the interview was not destined to occur; for, even while Miss Packard was gushing, I had chosen my text for Sunday morning: "Thou hast had five husbands, and him thou now hast is not thy husband."

As concerns weddings, "don't misunderstand me." I was "not sore exactly, but sensitive." You remember the caustic Mr. Zangwill's phrase, "Weddings and other depressing occasions." I had seen days when I sympathized somewhat with the caustic Mr. Zangwill, and I predict that the history of civilization in America will contain several fairly readable jeers at our marriage ceremonies.

Back in Thorpe, everybody knew when a marriage was impending. At great cost, as you can see, a girl's "fellow" took her to prayer-meetings, funerals and fires; he did it openly; one young Romeo even took his Juliet five miles through the rain to an auction; but the approaching nuptials were invariably denied by both the high contracting parties up to the very end. Then they would "drive over to see the minister," license in hand, and barnyards and "mowin's" would be scoured for "witnesses." Instead of a fragrance of roses,

there in my study, the ceremonies were redolent of cow. And yet the affair lacked a blemish provided in Sapphira, where the word "divorced" followed the groom's name and the bride's in the marriage license — printed there. If by some accident a candidate for holy wedlock had never tasted the sweets of divorce, the word could be crossed off.

As for the way things went in Port William, I thought them charming — except for two downright rowdyish abuses. I refer to horse-play and bride-smacking.

Directly the solemn religious was over, it had been considered reverent for somebody at the piano to strike up a ragtime jig. From then on, what a Mardi-Gras of monkeyshines! It was the French idea — only, the French behave better. They are married in church, and save up their monkeyshines till they have reached a "salon de noces" over the nearest saloon. There they dance and sing, but deny themselves the exhilaration of throwing things.

I may be stretching it, and yet I suspect that the very general American unwillingness to recognize the sanctity of marriage springs partly from the very general American unwillingness to recognize the sanctity of weddings. Suppose church wound up with a circus; how long do you suppose church would be taken seriously?

As for bride-smacking in Port William, even ministers had stooped to it, and grooms had submitted. At the very moment when the indignity was most offensive, a man would suffer his wife to

be kissed by any fellow coarse enough to go in for it. Plenty were.

Oh, yes, "circumstances alter kisses"! But isn't that an argument on my side?

I stopped all this, so far as my own parish was concerned, and nobody protested. In their hearts, people are not proud of the "rough house" we innocently term "a quiet home wedding." The very hoodlums will tell you afterward that it was disgraceful. And who honestly approves of bride-smacking? Not the brides, certainly, nor the smackers, while the grooms would crack a few heads over it, if the thing occurred a day earlier or a day later.

It is entirely possible to civilize weddings, just as it was possible to civilize funerals, abolishing the old-fashioned eulogy and the custom of "viewing the corpse." Those are rarities now.

But "don't misunderstand me." I am not denying that a wedding is a festival. I merely desire to defend the festival against vulgarities we tolerate at no other festivals. I would elevate a wedding to the dinner-party standard. We do not throw grouse — at a dinner-party — or kiss other men's wives.

I would suggest, too, that we ministers introduce a further experiment toward civilization — namely, conscience. Some awful marriages are going to take place; we can't prevent their taking place; but it is not we who should "solemnize" them. Why not leave it to justices-of-the-peace when Kitty Jones insists on marrying a Negro or a Chinese

laundryman or a seventy-nine-year-old "pension-bummer" in whose interest Congress has declared, "Be it imagined that William Smith, while keeping his grocery-store in Safe Harbor, Mich., was twice shot through the knapsack at Bull Run"?

So with the re-marriage of the flimsily or scandalously divorced. The law allows it. Then let some hired-man of the law's see it through. If we ministers take a hand in it—it is fun for the reporters and nuts to the ungodly. When people conclude that ministers will marry anybody—Jack Johnsons to Jeanne d'Arcs, Little Orphant Annies to Idiot Boys, eloping Tom cats to smirched Nanny goats—we all catch it together. A rain of contempt descends alike upon righteous and unrighteous.

You see, now, why I went home from that social at our church a good deal worked up. Think of an Ex-Senator's telling me religion had nothing to do with business, and a young woman's expecting me to hail the prospect of a church wedding for a notoriously dissipated dukeling and a grass widow!

The situation was the more exasperating because I could not see through it. I did not believe that these people were utterly unable to make me out. Nor could I believe they were tricking me. If the thrills, as I called them, had not come so close together, I should not have been tempted to connect them. But, even when I did, it seemed preposterous to conclude that there was a concerted effort to exert "pressure." It seemed equally pre-

posterous to conclude that there was a concerted effort to force me into hanging myself with my own rope. Things had gone too smoothly. No matter which way I looked at it, it puzzled me. I no more understood it than I do now.

You remember my saying that I had counted on some catastrophe — illness or disgrace or some such thing — to give me a hold on those who, pleasantly and politely, and with even a kind of cordiality as far as it went, held me at arm's length. But no such opportunity had offered. There had been sorrows enough, God knows, and yet, so far, they had spared the element I was unable to reach. I had had no chance to substitute deeds for words.

Well, there are times when words *are* deeds. One of those times was coming next Sunday. If I dared to stand up, with that wicked marriage impending, and "say just what I thought," wouldn't I be as much of a man in their eyes as Elbert Hubbard himself? I should "break through." They would see for once that I was more than a mere preacher of "idealisms." It would dawn upon them that my brain was not built in air-tight compartments, one for theory, the other for practise. There might be an awful rumpus before I got out of the scrape, but I should have shown my pluck, and, to that extent challenged their admiration. Perhaps their affection also. I was not blind to the risks, of course. And I don't pretend I was not scared. I shook in my boots. I had not been so alarmed since that awful Sunday I preached to Thorpe from the text, "He that winketh with the

eye causeth sorrow." And yet, afraid though I was to declare myself boldly, I was doubly afraid not to. If I depended on having it out with Mrs. Buckminster privately, it would not end there. She would tell, and make things hot for me. If I backed down and agreed to perform the ceremony, pop would go my influence with the devout, my hope of ever reaching the conscience of the worldly, and, along with the rest, my own self-respect. No, I could not surrender. If the church got "split," next Sunday morning, it would not be I who split it, it would be Mrs. Buckminster, divorcée.

I took unusual pains with my sermon, writing it out in full, getting Gertrude to go over it carefully, and making so many revisions and excisions and interlineations, that I had to sit up long past bedtime Saturday evening copying the whole thing for sake of legibility. Next morning, we revised it again, softening the few harsh phrases that remained and giving additional emphasis to the passages that had a tone of amiable persuasiveness.

Before writing this chapter, I did my best to recall the whole sermon, and I do not think it was in the least savage. I avoided censoriousness. I avoided the use of disagreeable terms. I drew it mild, as concerned style, throwing away plenty of chances to be vehement. It abounded in such conciliatory devices as "Now does it not seem to you?" and "Have you not always believed?" and "Looking back to your own wedding day and from your experience of a happy married life, surely you will agree with me that"—etc., etc.

I was in anything but a fighting mood. I was pleading. Imagine it — pleading for the decencies!

I shall not reproduce the sermon, except to show its general drift. There in my pulpit, I told my people that we Americans had reached a point where, legally, there was no longer anything binding in the marriage contract. The law recognized the sanctity of mortgages, of promissory notes, of agreements between traders, and of the relation between banker and depositor; it had ceased to recognize the sanctity of the marriage contract. By hook or crook anybody who wanted a divorce could get one. "Cruel and abusive treatment," meaning a handsomer man or a more voluptuous woman, was excuse enough — legally. Somewhere or other, a judge would feign to swallow it.

But morally — oh, that was different! Morally, the parties to a sham divorce were man and wife, and would remain man and wife till death did them part. Perhaps it was right for such couples to separate — that is, in extreme cases. I would not discuss that. Yet it could never be right for either to remarry while the other lived. If the law permitted, it was an immoral law.

Moreover, I said that the immoral law provided sufficiently for remarriage. Some secular official was authorized to preside over a new contract, no more binding than its predecessors. Then why drag a minister of Christ Jesus into the mess? Nothing in the Saviour's teaching authorized his consenting to that. No more did his own conscience. Even his discretion forbade. He would

be abdicating his claim to the right to preach. He would lose the respect of Christians, and bring contempt upon the church.

I said the words of Jesus applied literally to the woman who obtained a legally sound but morally unpardonable divorce and then remarried. Him she now had was not her husband, the other man was. She had violated the Seventh Commandment.

Mrs. Buckminster missed a lot by staying away from church that morning, though I had hardly expected her to come, as it was not one of her "days." She belonged to the class of worshipers whose spiritual calling-cards are inscribed "Christ-mases and Easters."

Now, before I go on to tell what followed the service, I want to pause half a second and dip into Psychology — nothing abstruse or difficult, merely a word or two on our recollection of sounds.

You look up from your newspaper in the library and say, "Why, that was the clock striking, out in the hall. Why didn't I listen and count?" Whereupon the clock obligingly strikes again, inside your head. One — two — three — four, and so on up to nine, stopping precisely where it stopped before. Or you are busy, counting the words in a manuscript, when suddenly you notice that some one has called out to you. "Oh, beg pardon!" you exclaim. "Did you speak, dear?" Before your wife can reply, the words she spoke say themselves over clearly and correctly somewhere between your two ears.

So we remember without having consciously caught the purport of a sound, and when the sound comes back we are aware that we heard it despite our absorption at the moment.

I am not digressing. This little dabbling in Psychology is essential, as it explains my experience that Sunday. I was absorbed while preaching. I might almost have been deaf. I thought only of the effect of my sermon on the people before me. Every time I glanced from the written page to judge if they "followed," I saw alarm in Gertrude's face, anger in fifty others, undisguised delight and sympathy in a hundred more, and in the rest a look part admiration, part dread. But toward the end — I could even note the point where the change set in and watch the growth of a general grim apprehension from then on — all the faces caught the same expression. Terror? Or no, not that exactly. The word is too strong. Say apprehension.

"I know what that means," I told myself. "The 'split' is coming. They can see it. They are afraid of what is going to happen after church."

During the closing hymn, at least thirty people went out. Rebels, I supposed. And although my head was in a whirl, I remember noticing that directly after the benediction there was a general and, as it seemed, concerted movement toward the doors. No stopping to chat. No sociable loitering. And yet nothing resembling a bolt.

In the ante-room, as I was shedding my gown, I said to myself, "Now you've done it!" though I

was not sure *what* I had done. Split the church? Then why were they all moving out together? If part of them were resolved to stand by me, why hadn't they come forward to say so? Why hadn't Robertson Knight come? Or Mrs. Gilder? Or hosts of others?

In my fever of alarm and perplexity, I dropped my manuscript. Loose sheets went everywhere. I stooped to pick them up. And it was this dull, mechanical, and decidedly trivial act that brought back a memory of bells. I was myself again, and recalled that bells had been begun ringing before the end of my sermon. They were ringing now.

I hung up my gown, seized my hat and overcoat, and hastened out into the church. It was empty. But next moment Gertrude and the children came running in from the street. Ned shouted to me, with keen zest in his voice, but Gertrude's shook.

For the bells were still ringing, and they were not church-bells, either.

XVII

FIRE

CHICAGO, Boston, Baltimore, San Francisco, Chelsea, Salem — what a list of conflagrations; and yet nobody seriously believes in the chance of his one day getting caught in a great fire.

When Ned came running up the middle aisle, shouting joyfully, "Shake a leg, Dad; it's a peach — the Sanatorium!" I retorted, "For shame, Ned — chuckling like this when poor invalids are in danger of being burned alive in their beds! You don't realize!"

No, Ned hadn't realized, nor did I, even then. It never entered my head that, instead of breaking our hearts over patients who were either got out safely by this time or past the need of being got out, we ought to be considering if we ourselves stood a show of getting out. The Sanatorium was three blocks off.

And yet, how strangely dark it had turned, there in the church, and how the tall, stained-glass windows jingled with a spatter of something curiously like hail and curiously unlike it!

Nobody realized — till too late — although it was easy afterward to recall what a stiff November breeze had been blowing since daybreak and to ask why the Department had taken the affair so lightly

at the outset. The first alarm had summoned apparatus from the direction of Garfield Terrace, which was why the bells had not been louder. The second had called reenforcements from still further to the east. You had to listen for the bells. It was not till within the last few minutes that a general alarm had set every wheel turning, every big Percheron galloping, and all the bells swinging on steamers, chemicals, hook-and-ladder trucks, hose-towers, and supply wagons.

The truth was, Chief Cronin did his duty. At sight of that blazing hospital, he roared out, "Damn the building, save the people!" So the people were saved. Who could blame Cronin if setting life above property endangered a whole city? He would have done the same if he had realized, and he didn't realize.

Nobody did—least of all, the crowds. The usual thing happened. Given the makings of a wholesale Chelsea conflagration, and twenty-thousand sight-seers will hurry straight into it, and when they change their minds, the problem is how to escape.

Things were at that pitch when Gertrude and I got to the street with Ned and the girls, and if you had told me the chaos of confusion we were to witness, I should have thought you crazy, though in reality nothing could have been more logical than the chaos—people running headlong across lawns, innumerable autos in the Avenue backing and turning and colliding with one another, a belated engine fighting to get through, things already

tumbling out of windows across the way, and an ambulance dashing by — not in the Avenue, for that was hopeless, but cutting along the unfenced dooryards.

No wonder! Sparks and blazing shingles rained everywhere, driven slantwise in a howling gale. It was not a November gale any longer. By the feel, it was April. And how low it blew the smoke. We could not see the Sanatorium. What we could see was a dozen roofs of private mansions bursting into flames. Even Fred Brandegee's house was blazing up, although further from the Sanatorium than we were. We joined the scared tumult of humanity, and fled — past the Parsonage without caring what became of it, through yards and over rear fences, in a scramble Gertrude may well be proud of, and brought up on the steps of St. Margaret's Academy, off to the north and — as it seemed then — out of the track of the fire.

There we rubbed our smarting eyes, drew a first breath of clear air, and looked back. What a spectacle! Out of the swirl of flame and smoke loomed the Central's great spire that screamed and the little one that tootled. Other spires, also — showing where "the First" was, and "the Burgess Avenue," and Calvary. Four churches, all blazing.

To think that, only fifteen minutes before, I had been crazing the faculties of my soul over the consequence of a mere sermon.

"Well!" gasped my wife. "We're out of *that*, thank God!"

I said, "Yes, thank God! thank God! Gertrude, my darling, we're *free!* Free to—"

No, I could not say it, Gertrude must; and Gertrude did—as if there were but one course open.

She took me by both shoulders, and looked into my eyes with joy dancing in hers. "Jim!" she cried. "The fire isn't headed for Livingston Street, but *we are!*"

Plenty of stranger things were going on round about us, so I hardly think anybody was much astonished when I caught the dear girl in my arms, and kissed her.

That sealed it, on my side; on hers, it was sealed with two words: "*You love!*"

The youngsters, however, were not so "emotional," and yet emotional enough if you write it without quotation marks. The destruction of the Parsonage hit them hard. Ned was in torments. As for Frances and Lydia, they wailed. Nor did it appear that the prospect of Livingston Street struck them any too favorably. Later on—but I must not get ahead of my story.

It was fortunate that I had become fairly well acquainted with Livingston Street. I said to Gertrude, "There's a perfectly decent boarding-house opposite the old church—Number 94. Ask for Miss Willis. You'd better go there at once with the children. I'll come as soon as the fire's under control—or if it gets out of hand entirely, I'll come prancing. But you see—"

Of course she saw. With his own parish right in the midst of it, a "metropolitan divine" could

hardly walk off and look after his own welfare while a first-class conflagration was raging. Suppose there should be a call for volunteers; and even suppose there shouldn't.

So we said good-by and I promised on my word of honor "not to run risks" and we parted — the youngsters pretty blue, I admit, though I thought I had never seen Gertrude happier.

And oh, how happy I was, myself! It is splendid, "losing everything," for then you have gained everything. No doubt my Ex-Senator will accuse me of "idealism." Let him! As it looks to me, Gertrude and I were "holding up" the world, Sapphira-fashion, and making it give us the one thing in life we most wanted. If that was not practical, what could be?

Along toward midnight, the fire stopped spreading, thanks to the wind's dying down, and we could measure the damage. Nothing much, as those things go; as compared with Baltimore, say, or Chelsea, or poor Salem. About three-fifths of a mile one way, rather less than half that the other. Four churches, the Sanatorium, St. Margaret's Academy, the High School, the Art Club, the Prairie Club, some few hundred of "thim homes iv luxury and alimony," and as many more that weren't — there you had the toll. All in all, not a disaster, an escape.

I turned homeward — homeward to Livingston Street — quite the hungriest, wettest, queerest-looking "metropolitan divine" you ever heard of. I had been caught in my regimentals. My "sacred

tile" had been smashed against the low ceiling, up where an excited fool had imagined there was a servant lying helplessly ill. My Prince Albert had mud mashed across one shoulder from a filthy hose. My hands and face were grimy. Where my overcoat had gone to I can't guess. And I smelt like a house a-fire — literally.

It paid, though — in fun. Hadn't I rescued Mrs. Buckminster's poodle, entirely overlooking her invaluable marriage-certificates? Hadn't I got in at Mrs. Sears's back door and been mighty glad to exercise auto-suggestion before getting out, hot foot? Oh, it was a high old lark, playing volunteer maniac in houses where I knew my name was Anathema Maranatha, D.D.! Especially as the aristocrats didn't suspect my little operations, and don't now.

How Gertrude laughed when I told her, and how she chuckled over our easy removal to Livingston Street! She recalled a joke from *Punch* I had once read her: "Roumania's motto on invading Bulgaria — 'J'y suis, j'y reste'. Freely translated, 'I am here, I Roumania.'"

"Bully!" I cried. "If you'll Roumania, I'll Roumania. Where the flag has gone up, it shall never come down."

Miss Willis, who was at our door just then bringing a tray laden with hot eatables for me, probably thought the "metropolitan divine" was out of his head:

Oh! but that supper tasted good; except for fireman's coffee and a sandwich, I had fasted since

morning, and I was fagged half dead. Preaching that sermon would have been enough for one day without the unaccustomed bodily exertion. Nevertheless, there was talk in me. We made Miss Willis sit down while I yarned away about the fire; and when I came to the end, she said, "Is it true that you think of settling permanently here in the neighborhood? I should suppose fine rich people like yours would rebuild uptown."

I laughed. "Maybe the richest will, but the finest won't. You wait and see. Perhaps by luncheon-time to-morrow there'll be something to announce. Till then, well, this much you can bank on, we're here to stay, no matter what turn things take."

I cut a funny figure at breakfast next morning, togged out in "Bob" Ainger's extra pantaloons from the third-floor-front and a coat and vest of Henry Leavitt's from the fourth-floor-back. My own duds — or what remained of them — still decorated a clothesline improvised across the kitchen.

There was quite a flutter when I appeared at table — because of the borrowed raiment, I thought at first, and hardly wondered. Nothing fitted. I was grotesque. For a "metropolitan divine," I was "impossible." But presently the little waitress brought me a *Press*, saying, "I guess you would like to see the paper" — and I understood from one glance at the front page what the flutter had meant.

Oh, monstrous! My picture a foot square. Foolish headlines about "heroism," "the fireman

parson," "narrow escape from death," and so on. Evidently some young idiot had seen me carrying a hose and fabricated the rest out of whole cloth, and some scamp of a City Editor had recognized a "scoop," and "played it up for all it was worth." It was the *Press*, through and through — anything for "human interest." On the whole, it had been a stupid fire; nobody killed, nobody seriously hurt; only property destroyed, and heavily insured property at that; an old story by morning anyhow, as the whole town had the details already — except about the "hero." By the look of that front page, you might have supposed I had saved the city single-handed.

I laughed till I nearly burst.

"Well, Gertrude," I said, when I was able to speak coherently, "this is our last fling at fame. Let's make the most of it."

The words were hardly out of my mouth when Miss Willis came in. "There are six reporters in the parlor," she said. "They want to interview you."

How had they found out where I was? Had somebody "trailed" me the night before? Had some boarder telephoned that morning? It would be interesting to know, and I believe I should have ferreted the thing out if I had not had my hands full with very much weightier matters. Unless I used my wits energetically those young rascals in the parlor would make a donkey of me in several dozen additional ways. I left the table and went in to talk with them, feeling anything but valiant

— because of my ridiculous clothes, for one thing, because of late hours for another, and because of stiff joints and lame muscles for a third.

They were nice chaps, those boys, and behaved beautifully. I had no trouble at all in coaxing them out of the "hero" nonsense. The *Press* had "hogged" that, anyhow. But they were determined to get some definite statement from me regarding the Central's future.

I can't blame them. Our flight to Livingston Street was as significant as it was unnecessary. Any one of half a dozen splendidly appointed downtown hotels would have offered us shelter. Besides, we could have gone to our own people outside the endangered district—the Mackayes, for instance, or the Suttons, or the Blacks. Why Livingston Street by preference? Couldn't I see that this aroused pretty lively curiosity. There must be "copy" in it, for nobody could help surmising that it had a direct bearing on what the Central meant to do.

I heard them through patiently, then said, "Now, gentlemen, you've been awfully nice about this, so far, and I want to be as nice in return. If I could speak for the Central Church, I would. I can't. But I'm not going to send you back to your editors empty-handed—that is, not if I know myself. Give me an hour. I'll meet you here then with a ripping good story. There isn't any news yet, but I'm going to make some. Is that a bargain?"

They jumped at it. Offer six reporters an hour

off in company and nothing tickles them better. They bowed themselves out, strolled down Livingston Street puffing cigarettes as they went, and as soon as they had got well out of sight, I put on a borrowed hat and stepped over to Flinn's Garden Theater, where I hoped to "make news."

Evidently I made a bad impression on the man at the box office. When I asked to see Mr. Flinn, he looked me over from head to foot, apparently sized me up as a ne'er-do-well desirous of negotiating a loan, and answered curtly, "No, he ain't here."

At that juncture, however, a portly, red-faced, coarse-featured individual, with a collar like John L. Sullivan's in the portraits and a cigar like "Uncle Joe" Cannon's in the cartoons, came up the steps.

"Mr. Flinn?" said I.

"That's *my* name," he retorted, implying, "I don't much care to hear yours."

But I knew my ground. Renegade Catholics never shake off a certain rather comical reverence for even the Protestant clergy.

"I've dropped in to pay my respects to you," I said. "I'd have come better dressed except for the fire. I'm the minister of the Central Church—burnt out, you know."

"Dropped in to pay respects" is a passport anywhere. The lower down in the scale, the surer its success. Besides, there is a lot of sympathy for refugees, the morning after. Even if I had not been a clergyman, I think I could still have man-

aged Flinn. As it was, a beefy paw gripped mine. "Pleased to meet you! Walk in, your reverence — here, this door — my private office. Now sit down, and make yourself at home. Seen the *Press*?"

"Bosh!" said I.

The perfect word! From the Irish point of view, magnificent — a "hayro" disclaiming "hayroism"! The best in the house was none too good for me then. Flinn rolled up the top of his desk, reached for a cigar-box, opened it with a do-me-the-honor sort of air, and held it out, smiling jovially.

"No, thank you," I protested. "Sorry, but I don't smoke, though we can talk business without that, can't we? I want to ask if it would interest you to put a price on the Garden Theater — nothing binding — just an offhand estimate by way of something to figure on. If you would consider unloading, I guess maybe we could get together on a price. I want this corner for old times' sake, with the notion of building a church here, and I believe there are people ready to back me with the 'needful.'"

All the geniality fled from Flinn's manner. He pulled out the slide of his desk, crossed his feet on it — insolently, almost — tilted over close to the danger point in his whirl chair, shifted his much-chewed cigar to the other corner of his mouth, and began studying the array of awful photographs on the wall. One especially seemed to interest him. "Ain't she a fine specimen of a woman?" he ap-

peared to be saying—to himself, not me. He made a bluff at ignoring my existence. As for selling, you might have thought it the last thing he would consent to.

I had expected this. Business was business. Barkis must not look too “willin’.”

But presently, he thrust a thumb into an armhole of his waistcoat and glanced shrewdly at me. “I ain’t stuck on moving,” he said—or rather smoked—“but now look here. If you folks will come across at the right figure, I ain’t no mule.”

Whereupon, he outlined a “proposition” that gave him “the long end,” doubtless, though from my standpoint, knowing my people as I did, it seemed ridiculously “easy.”

I said, “Thanks! We’ll go ahead on that basis, if you like, and see what can be arranged. It’s all in the air as yet. I’ll have to do some pretty tall coaxing to get the funds. And though I hate to trouble you, I shall need your assistance in that. I think the best way to work up sentiment will be for me to hold a service in the theater Sunday morning. You’d rent it, wouldn’t you?”

At that, his geniality returned, and he laughed, a big, hearty, gruff roar of a laugh, and exclaimed, “Rent it! Not on your life! Take it, and welcome.”

Which was generous of him, I don’t deny, but also canny. So we clinched it, and shook hands, and parted in a mood of genuine good fellowship.

When my reporters came back to the boarding-

house, they got a story worth the trouble, while on my side I helped myself to a free advertisement worth several small fortunes.

I began by telling them that I would preach next Sunday morning in Flinn's Garden Theater, formerly the Central Church, and that my address henceforth would be Livingston Street. Then I told them about Maggie — how Gertrude and I had first met her, how I had found her again after months of watchfulness, and what followed. I said this accounted in part for my strong attachment to the neighborhood.

Then I went on about the neighborhood itself — said it had been atrociously maligned; that it was held responsible for the misdeeds of entire outsiders; that its own people were a mighty good sort, though living in unfortunate surroundings and exposed to all manner of temptations; that they had come from the country, and that I was a country parson, resuming in a new field the kind of work I had been happy in for nine continuous years.

I dictated all this, patiently, slowly, and the boys took it down word for word. There I stopped. Not one syllable about "the future of the Central Church." Nothing to suggest even faintly that I believed anybody from uptown would think of coming to service in the theater. Not a phrase that could be twisted into an appeal for "support." Simply the facts, though I topped them off with the joke from *Punch*, declaring, "I am here and I Roumania."

As I have said, they were a nice lot, those boys.

They promised to "shove it in, word-perfect," and on no account yellow it up. And, so far as they were concerned, the promise was kept. Sensation enough—"a metropolitan divine" taking to the slums.

After they had gone, I trudged over into the skyscraper region—to the Bank, first, and after that to a clothier's, where whom should I meet but Robertson Knight?

He had a *Press* under his arm—plague take it!—but a great, hilarious grin across his face, and out popped the very last greeting I expected—"Well, well, *well*! Isn't this jolly? Ashes and clinkers and borrowed duds, but I'll tell you what, my boy, you've saved the Central!"

"Saved it!" I exclaimed. "Saved it!"

"Yes, by knocking it galley-endwise. They'll never rebuild. The swells are furious about yesterday's sermon, so there's one rotten institution wiped out, good and plenty. As for the solid folks, they're tickled right down to bed-rock—ready to follow you anywhere, and start new, and claim the old name, and be decent. Now you take my word for it (I've talked with a lot of 'em, and I know): your game is to sit still and let 'em come to you on their bended knees and ask to be let in on the ground floor. I'd be burnt out twenty times for the fun we're going to have."

Mr. Knight had had his own adventures the day before, with rags and tatters to pay for them, and he was fitting himself out at the clothier's to make himself presentable while his tailor was at work on

a new wardrobe. I was fitting myself out at the clothier's to be presentable while my tailor wasn't.

I got into a "snappy" fifteen-dollar suit, the kind I expected to wear all the rest of my days, and oh, it felt good! The posters on the fences had understated its charms outrageously.

Before I left, Mr. Knight gave me his address — until further notice, the Somerset — and asked mine. You should have seen his face when I told him! "Good boy!" he shouted, and thumped me on the shoulder. "Stick it out! Before a week, you'll be saying the whole round world is rolling downhill into your mouth."

Naturally, the temptation to run uptown and find my people was pretty strong, and yet, the more I thought it over, the more it seemed to resemble the front elevation of a mare's nest. I could not tell definitely who was inclined to stand by me and who wasn't. Besides, I felt that Mr. Knight had hit the nail on the head. There must be no wheedling. The impulse must be theirs. They must act on it without help.

So I went back to the boardinghouse — lame, now that the excitement had worn off, and monstrously tired. Gertrude put me to bed, and before I got to sleep, Ned and the girls looked in. They had seen the *Press*, and geyed me unmercifully. I shooed them off, laughing, and three minutes later it was half-past five in the afternoon, and I was hungry as a Polar bear, and Gertrude was saying, "I guess you'll have to get up, dear; we've got company."

304 CONFESSIONS OF A CLERGYMAN

Company! I should say so! Company in shoals.

My little interview in the early afternoon editions had brought a perfect stream of automobiles—some borrowed, some not. A hum of voices rumbled up from downstairs. I wriggled into my clothes, and if banister-coasting had not been too frightfully unministerial, I almost think I should have descended that way.

We had a social down there—none of your beastly mock-socials—the real thing. Crowded, though. It overflowed into the hall and up the stairs and back into Miss Willis's private den. Even at that, we were cramped for room. But this time Ned was not moved to comment, "Kill it! Don't let it suffer!" On the contrary, he called it "the best party he ever was at." Which was drawing it mild, certainly. To me it was a regular old-fashioned Port William jollification.

You can guess what we talked about, and I rather think you can guess the sort of service we had in Flinn's Garden Theater the following Sunday.

I don't claim much for my part in it. I was too busy all the week to prepare. Gertrude went from house to house preparing lists of boarders and lodgers, with their business addresses, and I made several hundred three minute calls in shops and offices, simply to introduce myself and shake hands. I didn't say, "Come to Old Man Flinn's next Sunday," but I guess they took my meaning.

It was a foolish campaign, of course. They would have come anyhow. I was a "sensation,"

and I had spoken well of Livingston Street in the papers, and called myself a country parson enjoying an "old home week" that wouldn't let up while I lived. Besides, what a novelty to go to church in a "burlesque" house! Stenographers and soda girls and dressmakers had wondered for years what Flinn's was like. Now was their chance to look in.

But if my sermon fell rather below the average that morning, what a tremendous sermon the Garden Theater itself was! It reeked of dead cigar-smoke. The floors were still damp with tobacco-spittle. At either side of the stage, placards left over from Saturday night's performance reiterated an announcement of "The Gay Co-Respondents." And you could see where the organ had been, in the choir-loft that was now a balcony, and scars here and there on the walls showed where marble tablets had honored the Central's dead, while the windows, much patched and disfigured, had an occasional remnant of stained glass.

No tirades of mine could have made the "move" more abhorrent. Here were its results. You could see them. You could smell them. You had a nervous, squirmy dread that, before the service ended, you would even feel them. Who knew but they might stick closer than a brother, and follow you home?

But I was not in a mood for tirades, even had I thought them needed. I was a great deal too happy. For the first time since my pastorate in Port William, I had a church — not half a church,

with "the world" for the other half. The dear, staid, consecrated, brave Christians from uptown had followed me. I could count on their devotion.

And for the first time, I was capturing poor, frivolous, unchurched Livingston Street. It did itself proud, that street. Except that I knew my own people individually, I doubt if I could have told which were uptown folks who had arrived by automobile and which were representatives of the neighborhood — that is, without scrutinizing them narrowly, and I might have blundered even then.

Must I pause and go into detail about that? Well, then, consider. At home in their country villages, these bookkeepers and ribbon-clerks and "salesladies" and little typists had been "as good as the very best, if not better." To be sure, they had "lost caste" by coming to town; they were "nobodies" now; but they had not lost the outward evidences of refinement. They were more mannerly, instead of less so, and had better taste in dress. If here and there some third-assistant sub-apothecary looked a shade too dapper in his Sunday best, so did many a youngster in Peacock Row. As for the girls, they were refreshing — modest, scrupulously neat, and aiming at simplicity rather than show.

But what a strange congregation, nevertheless — strange because of its being tilted up at a slant, and hung along the walls in tiers, and perched in birds' nests at either side of the stage! Meanwhile, what a curious experience to step out before a gaudy drop curtain where some frightful landscapist had depicted the Suwanny River — swans

and all! And how queer I felt in my fifteen dollar suit! You can buy a fifteen dollar suit in less than fifteen minutes; whereas, gowns are costly and difficult to obtain. Thus far no clothier has been obliging enough to advertise "snappy Genevan gowns." Too bad, with fires so frequent!

Another queer sensation, we had no choir. Had they chosen, I suppose our gilded quartette might have held us to our contract. They did not choose. Perform in the Garden Theater. Horrors! Worse than singing about "Down where the Sweet Potatoes Grow," with those beef-steak sunsets and bluing moonlight effects from the stereopticon! So Grace Davenport (of whom more later) volunteered.

I have said that I was only half-prepared that morning, and I stick to the assertion. But I also assert that nothing could have been more fortunate. I read the Twenty-Third Psalm, and, for a little beyond twenty minutes, extemporized out of my heart. It was a country sermon, just what Livingston Street had been used to. And though I referred to the fire, it was by way of devout thanksgiving for our escape, and without the faintest reference to "the future of the Central Church." Nor did I refer to the oddity of our worshipping the Saviour in such peculiar surroundings. There was no temptation. I forgot Flinn's Theater. I forgot the automobiles at the door. In spirit, I was "back home" in Port William, and I imagine five or six hundred young country folks were "back home" also. I don't know when I was ever moved

deeper down in the very innermost caverns of my soul than I was then. For I preached to myself, too. It had been a mad adventure, coming to Livingston Street without "support." I knew it. Gertrude did. But during the brief period of suspense, our reliance had been the Twenty-Third Psalm. Over and over again, I kept repeating, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." And when the children asked what was to become of us, that had been my answer.

Do you wonder I could preach? What minister couldn't after wrecking a high and mighty "metropolitan" church, and going through fire both literally and figuratively, and flinging his career to the winds, only to have the whole affair end like this—or rather begin like this? For so it seemed to me. A bad dream, that "metropolitan divine" fiasco. Wake up! And I had wakened—to a world all dewy with unspoiled freshness. I was beginning, now.

How we sang after the sermon! "Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me!" It rolled up from the tiers of worshipers before me, and out from the thronged balconies, and down from the topmost gallery. It was like a long-drawn sacred cheer—a gloria—verse after verse of it. It thrilled me. For I knew that after that I could make the appeal I had intended to from the first.

At the end of the last stanza, I said, "Before I ask God's blessing upon us, I want to request any who would like to speak and any who would like to listen to what is said, to keep their seats."

Then I pronounced the benediction, and sat down.

In an instant, a dozen voices broke out in as many parts of the theater.

I sprang to my feet — not as a minister, but as a chairman. The entire congregation had stayed. What wonder? It was an occasion strange in itself and very rare and touching.

We went ahead in the nearest approach to respect for parliamentary law I could manage, but there were moments when I lost my head completely, and my recollection of the affair is pretty confused. I recall Deacon Gardner's coming down the right-hand aisle and pointing at one of those placards the "Gay Co-Respondents" had left behind, and saying, "Look at that! Look! When this was a church, that was where the font used to stand. My two dead babies were baptized there." A woman spoke next, from a box: "I was married in this church! See what it's come to since." It was Mrs. Gilder. And then Frank Cushing stood up in the second row and said: "Somewhere back of that curtain is the spot where my mother lay in her coffin, the day we buried her." And so it went. I had only to prevent three speaking at once.

Then the subscriptions began. No matter what Flinn asked, the Garden Theater was to come down, and the shady apartment house behind it likewise, and the disgrace abolished forever, and a fine modern edifice put up, to the glory of God and the recovery of the Central's good name. We were "back home" to stay.

I caught up a hymn-book, whipped out a lead-

pencil, and noted down the subscriptions on a fly-leaf, my hand trembling with excitement. For as much as a quarter of an hour, it simply rained money — a thousand here, five thousand there, and twenty thousand over yonder, with small sums shouted out in between. I could have cried. And I should not have been alone in that. What brought a mist before our eyes was the innumerable little subscriptions from stenographers and clerks — “mine own people,” residents of the neighborhood. It carried me off my feet, and it was I who started the hymn, in a voice half-choking,

“Praise God from whom all blessings flow.”

XVIII

THE CHURCH THAT CAME BACK

WHEN I played at ordering a "portrait of the author" for this volume, what a mistaken idea you must have got! If I recall, there were hints of "a fine ecclesiastical background" — the "ivied, tawny-gray Parsonage," the "collegiate-looking gables of our Parish House," and a church with "battlemented towers of tawny-gray stone, where the ivy has not yet climbed, but will."

So you imagined I was writing from some miniature cathedral-close, where good books in tasteful bindings, good company of the high-bred sort, good dinners doubtless, and an occasional "sermonette" were the luxuries I lived for.

Whereas, had the background been a trifle broader, it would have taken in the rows of Livingston Street rooming-houses I look out upon now.

I shall not trick you again. I shall answer any questions you care to ask, even to telling how the Central managed to afford this really quite extensive "plant." A mere fraction of the money we needed rained down from dowdy galleries and proscenium boxes, that Sunday at Flinn's. To build properly, we had to demand our share of the uptown insurance and of the sum accruing from the sale of the uptown site.

It was a ticklish situation. Mr. Montague Glass

would have had no end of fun with it. What a chance for that lawyer of his, the great Henry D. Feldman! Legally, who constituted the Central? We, with our downtown crankinesses, or the other set? And if the Central no longer existed, legally, then who owned what?

It was soon settled, however, and I must give the stand-patters credit for considerable generosity. With a "split" and a fire, they thought the Central had trouble enough without a lawsuit, and I suspect that in their hearts they rather sympathized with our downtown intentions. They got Judge Penrose to write an "opinion," handed over the share he allotted us, and, not at all unamiably, connected themselves with other churches.

We still felt poor, though. We were few — barely half as numerous as formerly, while our ambitions were pretty exuberant, I must confess. Which leads me to speak of our economies.

My income? Why mention that? It is a good two-fifths what it was. The singers' salaries? Miss Davenport asks only a tenth of the amount we paid our vastly less artistic "artists," and the chorus she trains costs nothing.

There are manifest economies, too, in that "fine ecclesiastical background." The low Gothic towers lack spires, and we have dispensed with architectural frippery, and the group includes nothing that is not needed and used. This is how we have made ends meet and lap over, so as to finance our "social wing."

And now I imagine you are asking what we want

of a "social wing," anyhow. After the neighborhood's response, that first Sunday, why couldn't we have "restored" the desecrated church, tolled our bell, and expected multitudes to come hopping?

We were a lot too "wise." That sort of enthusiasm rarely lasts. Nobody with his hair on supposes it will. Besides, it was an unstable population, there in Livingston Street, changing completely every three or four years. Young folks married, and cut for the suburbs; or tired of city life, and went "back home"; or prospered surprisingly and moved uptown. If we were to hold our own, we must keep angling for new-comers. And we must bait our hook with tid-bits the neighborhood knew how to appreciate. Hence our little thirty-three-ring show, with attractions ranging all the way from billiards for men to a class in home-grown shirtwaists for girls.

There was nothing very novel in this. We were simply borrowing ideas from the settlement houses and the Y. M. C. A. and its feminine counterpart, but keeping our philanthropies visibly connected with the church, almost as if labeled, "Applied Christianity, Exhibit A." We wanted to "let our light so shine" that the neighborhood would see our good works and glorify the Father in Heaven.

However, it may be that you have another text in mind — one about "loaves and fishes" — and a suspicion that we have become a mere polite copy of the institutions where hoboes "love the Lord" with a view to "a plate of beans and an old pair of pants."

Nonsense! The neighborhood is free to stuff itself sick on our "loaves and fishes," and at the same time refuse our sacramental bread and wine. Some do. And the hundreds who have joined us "on confession of faith" are no more welcome at our "movies" and bowling alleys than the others.

What we aim at is to coax young people in, put ourselves on jolly terms with them, and see if a few evenings in the friendly Parish House atmosphere won't start a curiosity as to what we are like in church. Generally this works. The frivolous "gum-chewer" whose object at the start is to catch the trick of making two "dizzy" shirtwaists grow where before there was but one, falls into the church-going habit without quite knowing why. She has not thought the thing through. She doesn't say, "This is 'Applied Christianity, Exhibit A'; it convinces me; therefore I will glorify the Father in Heaven." Yet the result is the same. The unchurched shop-girl is unchurched no longer.

And don't tell me we are "secularizing" religion. None of our "doings" profanes the church, for none of our "doings" takes place there. The Parish House was built to prevent just that, and as for the church, people called it "churchly to the point of austerity" at first.

We had expected that. The tawny-gray walls had no stencilling, the pews were not luxurious, and the oaken roof lacked ornament. But this was before radiant memorials in stained glass had replaced the temporary windows. It was before our class in wood-carving had finished the Gothic

pulpit and the rich panelings behind it. It was before our girls had much to show for their course in ecclesiastical embroidery.

No one criticizes now. The ornamentation is where it belongs. Our gleaming windows picture the life of Jesus. The pulpit, the lectern and the font have been adorned by loving hands. All that serves the mere comfort of the congregation is severely plain, while everything that serves the devout worship of God is magnificent.

We even think we have put our choir where it belongs. In a cathedral, the more conspicuous the choir, the churchlier the effect. Cathedral choirs look devout in their cassocks and surplices, and cathedral choirs don't flirt. But we had not built a cathedral. We thought a lad-and-lass chorus like ours should be heard, not seen — which was why we put it at the back of the church.

Nevertheless, we left one loop-hole open for those who say we are "secularizing" religion. Let them make the most of it! Although our Sunday School children assemble in the church for the "opening exercises," they march over to the Parish House for their lessons, so that each class can have a separate room. Dreadful! And yet — oh, come now! Is there anything holy about inattention, anything heavenly about the usual Sunday School Babel, anything sacred about an educational flub-dub that inebriates but does not cheer? We mean business in our Sunday School. We employ a graduate of the "State Normal" as superintendent, and separate classrooms were the first thing he demanded

And who says the surroundings are ungodly? Sometimes I think that in God's sight our Parish House is as sacred as the church. See what that "secular" institution has brought to pass.

Last Sunday morning I preached to twelve hundred people, and there were nearer sixteen hundred at evening worship. I boast of this shamelessly. It is not my triumph. It is the triumph of social work under the leadership of the Dear Departed.

When I looked about for a dynamo in trousers to galvanize the Parish House, Gertrude reminded me that I had once declared my predecessor in Port William cut out for just that kind of job. She was joking—that is, at first. She realized that a Byefield Professor of "Moabite Semicolonology" could not be expected to bounce out of his pedagogic chair simply because I put up a finger and whistled. But a few days later a thing happened.

Down in an out-of-the-way corner of an inside page of the *Press*, Gertrude saw a little dispatch from Buffalo announcing a round-up of "Semicolonologists" there the following week. Sure enough, the Dear Departed was in it, scheduled for a paper. Something about the inscriptions on a Moabite brick-bat, I believe.

"Why don't you scoot East, and nab him?" she said.

It seemed ridiculous, and yet hadn't the semicolons snatched him out of Port William, and wasn't there at least one chance in a thousand that by this time he was ready and itching to be snatched out of Byefield?

You know what came of my trip to Buffalo, and if you know the latter-day history of Byefield you can put your finger on the circumstances that delivered the Dear Departed into our clutches.

"Truth," "diplomacy," and "the consensus of opinion among the best German critics" had had their perfect work. Each succeeding crop of graduates at Byefield was skimpier than the one before. People predicted that either the Board of Visitors would cleanse the Seminary with a whip of small cords or Byefield would go pop at no distant date. But nobody seemed to understand that it was going pop already. The year of my trip to Buffalo, the entrance class numbered seven (count them) and the Senior Class numbered one (count him at your leisure). When I heard this from the Dear Departed in the Tift House, I was amazed.

And I was amazed at the Dear Departed. He was the same big, rubicund hilarity of a man as when I had last seen him, but he had grown balder and at the same time mellower. Thanks to the influence of his second wife, he was a regular out-and-out Christian. I could not be too glad I had come.

You can guess what I said when he spoke of Byefield's approach to extinction. "Despite Moabite Semicolonology?"

"No, because of it!" he confessed, and reddened, and then went on, vehemently, "We're getting our come-up-once! What are we, anyhow, but a bunch of self-satisfied little private scholars, teaching in order to feed our hobbies, and taking pay for un-

fitting men for the ministry by wasting their time and souring their souls and upsetting their wits? I'm sick of it. If I could see a living at some honest trade, I'd bolt."

It struck me that this was "slamming" Byefield rather worse than it deserved. For the faculty were sincere in their notions about "truth" and all that. If they were self-satisfied, what wonder? Living a calm, tepid, cloistered life, apart from the world of realities, they fell victims to a humbug common enough in our day, and

"Sat on the sand,
And held their own hand,
And never got on to the sell."

Still, it was refreshing to see the Dear Departed arise in his might, and a lot more refreshing to see him jump at the opening our Parish House offered and hear his great, hearty roar when I wound up by quoting the well-known "barker" outside the Bowery show: "Come in, an' t'ink you're livin'!"

He came — wife, kids, baby and all — and Livingston Street could well count itself lucky. He was the man in ten million, and don't imagine he came in a cloud of smoke, either. He had chucked that, long ago. The Byefield Faculty were not "sports."

I could talk you blind, simply with an abbreviated catalogue of the things the Dear Departed set going with a rush at the Parish House, to say nothing of those outside — such, for instance as our rescue mission in Baldwin Place and our "Bet-

ter Babies" campaign among the Greeks and Syrians over toward the railroad, and our Neighborhood Improvement Association, and—but no, I can't say the Dear Departed was responsible for starting our "mission to the nabobs," though it was he who first got Ned Archer here on a visit that bids fair to last as long as Ned does.

"I'm thinking of having you burned for heresy," Archer said to me one day. "This running away from dollars and running after souls is worse than Restorationism. Aren't there souls behind the dollars? Aren't you neglecting them? And now look here, Jim; aren't you posing in front of your own conscience as a paragon of self-sacrificing heroism, when the truth is, you are only following the line of least resistance? Be honest! You know as well as I do that you've settled down to work among people you like and understand. That's nothing. The test would be in getting busy among the set you left behind you."

He was chaffing, of course, but I winced nevertheless. My uptown ministrations had dwindled wofully. I squirmed in my boots every time I visited my wealthy parishioners in the burned district that was now built up with finer mansions than before. For I kept meeting the stand-patters, and although they were nice to me—phenomenally nice, considering—it was a beastly experience, and gained nothing by repetition.

More and more, I came to confine my work to getting hold of the neighborhood, and the problem was how to find time enough even for that. My

mornings I gave to the preparation of my sermons and to correspondence with country parsons about young folks who were coming to the city, or had already come, or were crazy to "get back home" and didn't see how to fetch it. My evenings I spent in the Parish House. For it was useless to call in the evening. The neighborhood was "not in." It was out, jollifying, either at the Parish House or at places less wholesome. In the afternoon, I chased all over the business regions, hunting up people the rural clergy had put me on the trail of.

So — there you were.

I tried honestly to get free for uptown visitation by refusing to sit on platforms, address clubs, and preside at rallies, but it was no go. Meanwhile my uptown people encouraged me to stay downtown. As we met constantly at the Parish House, what harm in that?

A lot of harm, and I knew it if they didn't. I had made them philanthropists and reformers, to a degree. So far, excellent. I was shoulder to shoulder with them in the work I loved. Yet work is not the whole of life or the best of it. The best is the life of the spirit. You can work to grand effect, for a time, and be starved, spiritually, all the while. Enough of that, and you can no longer work. That was why I felt that by drifting away from my rich parishioners, little by little, and knowing them mainly on their working side, I was unfitting myself to preach to them as I ought.

And, until Ned Archer whacked it into me, it

had never entered my head that we had done a cowardly thing in deserting the "nabobs." Foolishly, I had thought it rather fine. It looked less so now. For none of us could see that the gilded churches they had joined were giving them what they needed. Suppose, now — but let me get back to that talk with Archer.

When he pitched into me about the path of least resistance, I turned on him, and said, "How would *you* like to go rescuing the nabobs? Say the word, and I'll sick you on 'em!"

If you remember how he lost his head when the Council got after him in the church at Durham and how he burst in among them in the midst of their star-chamber proceedings down below, you will understand how this hit him.

"By George," he exclaimed, impulsively, "if you chaps will build me a little chicken-house of a branch church uptown, I'm just crazy enough to pitch in and make a go of it!"

"The line of least resistance!" I said. "You like nabobs. You understand them. Your whole experience, so far, has trained you to get on with them. But I'll tell you what, old man! I'll talk this over with the powers that be, and if they agree to stand by you, you've got to stand by us."

How people do love phrases! The mere rhetorical snap and tingle to the phrase "a mission to the nabobs" made it interesting, though it had a practical appeal into the bargain. Among our uptown folks there were aged persons and invalids. A branch church would fill a need. For the rest,

Archer could share my work to some extent, while I shared his. And the idea of a resident pastor uptown "took" from the first. It gained ground when our aristocrats got to know the Archers. Besides, there was a field waiting to be tilled. Just a word about that.

As is commonly the case in these rapidly growing Middle Western cities, there was a tendency to build further and further away from the "smoke belt." After the fire, several ultra-fashionable families moved on toward what were then the city limits. Others followed. So there was room enough for our chapel. Putting it where we did, it was within reach of our own people and at the same time within reach of those living further out.

All this is recent, comparatively, and I suppose Archer's success would have been a slow growth except for the awfully obliging outbreak of hostilities between the former Mrs. Buckminster and her dukeling.

Maybe our present-day aristocrats believe in divorce, but when a woman goes in for it habitually and as a beverage, tolerance has its bounds, especially if the newspapers pile on, and the musical comedies fling gibes, and even the comic press sets its cartoonists to work, making the affair not only odious but ridiculous. "Society" is not armored against that. It winces.

I don't mean to say that I could have walked uptown and tackled the stand-patters first thing with a "Well, now, the laugh is on you; come home, and all will be forgiven," and expected to get off alive.

But I certainly do mean to say that the wave of resentment against this newest divorce helped Archer considerably. People don't like to remember splitting a church by way of condoning an adulterous marriage; when the marriage breaks down and a nation-wide guffaw salutes its collapse, they begin to wish they had not split the church. If there is as much good in them as there was in those nabobs of mine, they want to make amends.

No immediate result followed. But after about a month, several of the erstwhile "St. Croesans" put in an appearance at Archer's Sunday morning services. Aha! Coming half way!

It was "up to us" then.

The following Sunday Archer and I "exchanged." It seemed to us right. I in my turn must come half way. And yet it was a test. If those people were in earnest, they would stick by. If not, we would bide our time, hoping to catch them another way later on.

To my infinite delight, they stuck. There was no "scene" after church. Nobody fell on my neck or spoke of "burying the hatchet" and "letting by-gones be by-gones." The handful of retired "St. Croesans" were too well-bred for that. They acted as if their ancestors had worshiped in Archer's chapel for generations. But underneath this outward serenity, I knew there must be feelings not in the least serene. No doubt they had been there a long, long time, and I had failed to understand. I was never their man. They no more un-

derstood me than I understood them. Picturesque peasant! Court-chaplain! *Rubbish!*

However, Archer understands them through and through. He grew up among such people. To come to us, he resigned a parish overflowing with them. He had the touch that is not defied by kid gloves, the insight that reads hearts through all their sheathing of decorum. I trust that in time I shall learn from Archer to sense the humanity back of aristocracy, for it is as true in churches as elsewhere that

“The Colonel’s lady and Rosy O’Grady
Are sisters under their skins.”

Meanwhile, I believe that Archer will learn to understand Livingston Street. It seems to me that he is in a fair way to, already. The Parish House takes to him, and he to the Parish House. He grows broader every day. I can see it.

And looking ahead, I can see a great thing coming to pass. Unless some calamity spoils our plans, we shall be playing into one another’s hands all around. Young rustics from country churches will be captured by the Dear Departed at the Parish House, given into my charge at the Livingston Street church, and, when they have moved uptown or to suburbs not too far from our “mission to the nabobs,” laid hold of by Ned Archer. Nor is this all. Our uptown work should benefit our downtown work.

This last point sounds fantastic, I know. There

was once a Frenchman, so they say, who invented a wonderful machine for turning live rabbits into Derby hats. He would put in the rabbits at one end, twirl a crank, and presto! out would tumble the Derby hats at the other end. Then a bright idea popped into his head. Why not reverse the process, putting in Derby hats at the exit, working the crank backward, and watching live Bunnies hop out of the entrance? This, however, was not a success.

And yet we have hopes. If we are preparing downtown folks to go uptown and be Christian there, we are also preparing uptown folks to come downtown and be Christian there. Quite a few of our best helpers at the Parish House are "nabobs" Archer got hold of at his chapel. Nor does it appear that the "mission" has accustomed our own aristocrats to staying away from Livingston Street. "Wish I could," said Robertson Knight, the other day, "but, hang it all! the work down there is too pesky interesting."

After a few years more, we ought to have two strong churches, feeding each other. And we ought to have two ministers so intimately acquainted with each other's fields that they can exchange pulpits without detriment either to the uptown campaign or to the downtown campaign. When we have reached that stage, I can repeat my Livingston Street morning sermon at the "mission to nabobs" Sunday evening, modifying it here and there to give it a more local application. And Archer can repeat his "nabob" sermon in Living-

ston Street. With only half as many sermons to prepare, we can make them twice as good and have the inspiration of preaching each sermon to twice the number of people we are now reaching.

Quite a triumph, this we are looking forward to for the Central, yet how easily we are marching straight toward it! Nobody "counts the cost." Nobody feels that there has been any "cost." Our idea is that we have been pampering ourselves ever since the Central took the bit in its teeth and came back. And if you will think a moment, you will see how natural that idea is. Look at it from my uptown parishioners' standpoint first.

Returning to Livingston Street involved no sacrifice. It was a kind of self-indulgence. It enabled them to make peace with their consciences, abolish a standing disgrace, and, by wiping out Flinn's Garden Theater, obtain a decent neighborhood to work in, for my friend the police-Captain was not wrong in his notion that it was outsiders fetched in by the "home of burlesque" who had given the district an air of depravity.

Nor did it seem to my people from uptown that they were "getting in with the wrong set" by making friends in Livingston Street. "Back home," the bulk of these transplanted country folks had been "quality," and a lot of them were on their way to being "quality" in town. To be sure, they were employed at despised occupations. But clerks and stenographers are not "pizen," whereas some young nabobs are. If Tom Walker ran awful risks of using the slightly larger fork instead of

the slightly smaller one, when Mrs. Gilder entertained him at dinner along with his sweetheart, Dorothy Branner, Tom was a gentleman clear through, while Dorothy was a lady. And Mrs. Gilder knows as well as I do that she herself might make some shocking "break" were she to attempt "moving in the best circles" in the village Tom and Dorothy came from.

I suppose my king-pin argument in behalf of Livingston Street's gentility is a remark the great Mrs. Sears let drop the other day.

But, dear me, how lightly I am handling the story — talking as if there had been nothing at all phenomenal about our luring that embattled dame to Livingston Street! Well, was there? I can't see it, myself. When the Parish House was built, Gertrude dared me to write Mrs. Sears and ask her advice about starting a class in Psychotherapy. Half in fun, I chanced it. It struck me as a joke on Mrs. Sears. She would be furious at first, but I rather guessed she would cool off and own herself cornered when she remembered how she had pestered me with her hobby for months and recognized that, just as soon as I had a place to stable it, I was inviting the hobby in.

Nevertheless, I was a good deal in earnest. If the Parish House got to be a clinic, as well as circus, a party, and a college of practical arts, what matter? There was little probability that it would. Livingston Street was too youthful. And yet Livingston Street was banking on its youth and in danger of using up its nerves prematurely. A

class in "right living" would benefit a considerable number of overworked office and shop people whose ignorance of the nervous system and its care would have horrified a Psychotherapist into neurasthenia.

Then, too, I wanted to show Mrs. Sears that no rancor on my part had survived the storm she raised about Maggie. None did. I knew the Maggie affair had been only a convenient club to wallop me with when my coldness toward Psychotherapy furnished the motive. Nor had there been any face-to-face set-to between me and Mrs. Sears. I was not asking her to "eat her words."

Three days passed, and no answer came. But on the fourth, Mrs. Sears did. And the class was started. A class, not a clinic. We don't "treat cases." Good reason: there aren't enough cases to make it worth while.

Now to get back to that remark of the great lady's about our Livingston Street folks, which was this, "I'd give anything in the world if I could see my daughters develop the charming simplicity your girls have down here. It's so genuine and unaffected and winning. Don't you suppose it would take some of the artificiality out of Helen if she should join your Chautauqua Circle?"

I told her I most certainly did, and Helen joined, and maybe by the time the young creature is eighty she will be up to the Livingston Street standard — that is, with "application" and prayer.

But there is a detail I am overlooking. Isn't it a hardship for people from uptown to travel such

a distance to church, and doesn't that involve some sacrifices? Ask them. They will answer you, laughingly, "Didn't you ever hear of those contrivances called automobiles?" Once in the world there was some slight excuse for the eagerness with which a wealthy church moved uptown. Times have changed. When people say, "Sorry, but really, you know, it's too far," I seem nevertheless to scent gasoline.

As for my own little sacrifices, I mean to be frank about those. My first anxieties, naturally, concerned the youngsters. "Think of bringing up the youngsters in that horrid Livingston Street!" people cried, and it gave me the shudders — that is, till I found the obvious retort, "Think of bringing up children among snobbish little aristocrats in 'the Avenue'!" Besides, I had a "car" of my own — second-hand and no beauty, but serviceable and necessary; I could never have covered the neighborhood, the business section and, to some extent, the Avenue without it. Given the car, we loaded it with my youngsters and the Dear Departed's youngsters, whisked them off to civilized public schools, and fetched them home the same way. Don't call this undemocratic. The neighborhood, populated almost wholly with the unattached, is without a public school, and if we were to choose the nearest it would mean throwing our children in among small Italians, Greeks, Syrians, and Lithuanians, over toward the railroad.

As for social contacts, Ned and the girls are pretty seriously over-run with company from up-

town, and while they are in and out of the Parish House constantly, I don't think it hurts them. Quite the contrary. Even the occasional weird type our rescue mission sends us has been roaringly converted before coming.

I confess, too, that my esthetic sensibilities, such as they are, caught a bit of a thump at first. Livingston Street is not beautiful. It is not even picturesquely hideous. But one gets accustomed to "dinkiness" and ceases to notice it. Instead, one notices bright young faces and jolly smiles and a thousand agreeable evidences of vigor and hopefulness and ambition. They make up for the loss of architectural glories as exemplified in "thim homes iv luxury and alimony."

A further confession, there were moments when I was alarmed about my finances. How could we live on so little? An absurd question! How can any minister live on any salary? The more he gets, the more he spends. If the sum is large, he must put on style (an irksome task, generally, for not one minister in a thousand was brought up stylish) and he must entertain lavishly, and everybody expects him to give away twice what he earns. If the sum is small, so are the exactions that go with it. All a minister wants or needs is leave to count on an "irreducible minimum" and the certainty that the payment of his "irreducible minimum" will be prompt. I have no worries on that score down here.

So it beats me to see where my sacrifices come in. We are provided for. We are where we want to

be. We are radiantly happy in the work we love. Beyond all expectation, we are succeeding. And we are nearer to Christ in Livingston Street than ever we were before.

But — bless you! — I am not saying there is not a type of clergyman who makes sacrifices. It is the type with a large salary, a fine parsonage, a gorgeous church, and parishioners who trust their minister so implicitly that they can snore while he reads his helpless little compositions or go golfing. There's your martyr! There's your hero! For he is denying himself his heart's one passionate, burning desire — i.e., the gentlemanly and on the whole reasonable luxury of blowing out his brains.

XIX

FINALLY, BRETHREN

WHO am I, to conclude this volume with a preachment to preachers? No "thinker" and at most a mere back-street parson, I can only sum up the sermons experience and reflection have been preaching to me this many a long year.

About our duty toward the Seminaries, for one thing — the duty, that is, of nudging them with a sharp stick. Wake up, ye "institutes of sacred learning"! Don't sleep forever!

"We need those sheets for table-cloths;
It's nearly time for dinner."

I am in earnest, though. Just to illustrate the quaintness of the situation, suppose I sketch you my curriculum for a proposed Medical College which will do for a budding physician what a Seminary does for a budding clergyman.

As only three years separate the beginner at my establishment from the day when he will hold your health in the hollow of his paw, I require him —

To spend a considerable part of that time studying Egyptian hieroglyphs, these being as useful to a family doctor as Hebrew and Greek to a minister;

To pursue courses in the history of extinct poisons, thus paralleling the theologue's contemplation of extinct heresies;

To investigate Hindu prescriptions, Samoan prescriptions, Cypriote prescriptions, and Hottentot, Tagalog, Sudanese, Piute, Manchurian and Simian prescriptions in order to show that the student of Comparative Religions "has nothing on him";

To ignore the anatomy of the human body, just as the theologian ignores the anatomy of the human soul;

To steer clear of *Materia Medica* in the same spirit in which divinity students steer clear of what might serve as subject-matter for future sermons;

To shun instruction in hygiene as carefully as budding preachers shun instruction concerning the health of the spirit and its maintenance;

And to gain no more aptitude for peering down throats, taking temperatures, feeling pulses and repairing broken bones than young gentlemen at a Seminary gain for treating a diseased conscience or healing a broken heart.

At the end of the three years, out comes my finished product, to acquire the A. B. C. of his trade by sacrificing patients, precisely as the Seminary graduate acquires the A. B. C. of his by sacrificing a parish or two.

Congratulate me! So far as I can see, my proposed Medical School equals an "institute of sacred learning" at all points save one — i. e., longevity. For I should expect the Legislature to come down

on me and my plan like a falling house, within the space of anywhere from fifteen to twenty minutes.

Strange, that with "vocational training" in the air, let alone "efficiency" and "scientific management," these extraordinary survivals of Rabbiniism called Seminaries go on unmolested! Strange, too, that we even forgive their curious, unpatriotic, hide-bound subservience to "the consensus of opinion among the best German critics"! The War should have modified that.

I don't mean that we ought to bounce semi-agnosticism simply because it is "made in Germany." I am not so rancorous. My point is that we ought to quit the cordiality that, simply because semi-agnosticism is made in Germany, swallows it whole. For the War has shown us pretty plainly that Herr von Homer can nod.

Despite his elaborate spy-system, he thought France weak, Belgium cowardly, the British Empire on the eve of dissolution, and Italy eager to die for the Kaiser. No, brethren, Herr von Homer is not quite infallible.

Nor is he always quite logical. Hitting first, he declared himself attacked. To defend his culture, he used some surprising arguments at Rheims and Louvain. When he wanted to prove that the Belgians had violated neutrality, he cited a document of quite alien purport. If it demonstrated anything, the drift of it was not to Herr von Homer's purpose but to Belgium's.

And neither does it appear that the infallibility

we had thrust upon him gained much glory from his declaring he "never wanted to take Paris"; or from his grumbles about Africans and Asiatics among the Allies while he was prodding up Arabs and Turks to engage in a "holy war"; or from his discounting Bernhardi, while employing that gentleman's best-seller as a guide-book.

Oh, of course, you can't expect flawless logic in war-time. Nobody does. But methinks Herr von Homer might have been several times foxier than he was. Bereft of nice, handy, serviceable, knock-down arguments, why didn't he try silence? I wish he had. For then we should have been in a position to make friends with him more comfortably at the close of the War.

You see the bearing of all this on "the consensus of opinion among the best German critics." With Herr von Homer nodding—so manifestly that even we poor little Americans can detect it—our faith in German infallibility beginneth to wobble. It strikes us that perchance we, too, have wits—and possibly intellect.

But when was intellect—even the infallible German intellect we believed in—of service in unveiling the sublime mysteries of God?

Right in the very heat of a learned dissertation—at Harvard, say, or Oxford—comes some yokel of a D. L. Moody—dialect, vile grammar, and all. Students—yes, and their professors, too—flock to listen. The result? Visions of Christ enthroned. Stricken hearts opened heavenward.

Character shaken to its foundations, purged, seared with fire, and rebuilt in the spirit of Jesus our Lord.

Could a Germanized theologian achieve that? Could he teach anybody to achieve anything in the least resembling it?

There are nervous days ahead for the Seminaries. Unless they begin making ministers, instead of metaphysical savants, specialized linguists, archæological experts, and "thinkers" pathetically unfitted to undertake "the cure of souls," their race is run. We are not dependent on Seminaries. If they keep on failing us, we shall go back to the old-fashioned custom of placing out our lads as pupil-assistants under clergymen of talent and consecration. That worked. It would work again.

But there is another thing we ministers must accomplish besides insisting on a reverent, sane, spiritual, "vocational" system of ministerial preparation — the preparation that is, that "forms the priest" in mind and heart and soul — a system "rooted and grounded in love" and bearing fruit abundantly. That other thing we must demand is the founding of a new science. "Church Economics," I call it.

Dull enough that sounds. But wait. See if it is not all glowing with bright possibilities, promising a better church, a better church-goer, and, I need hardly add, a better minister. Let me outline its theory — or rather, its practice.

It begins by abolishing free tuition at the Seminary — free rooms, also, and "aid," and the sub-

sidized larder. It makes it as difficult to get into the ministry as to get into the law. No more eleemosynary underwear for "mendicant friars." No more blighting of self-respect. No more advice to "grab all you can get now; by-and-by you'll wish you'd grabbed more." Church Economics puts the profession on a sound business basis at the outset and keeps it there.

Naturally, lads will enter the Seminary a bit later than at present. What of it? The time they spend piling up money to pay as they go will give them a taste of normal, practical, out-in-the-world living. Graduated at thirty, and trained in a school that "forms the priest," they will be very different products from the queer, green bunglers we put up with now. And naturally, they will be fewer. Bravo! Just the result we aim at.

Quick, brethren, a halo for St. Malthus!

There are too many of us clergymen — a great, great deal too many. That is why some have "the caution of their convictions" and are not quite sure who owns "the most centrally located of their features." They know that dozens, perhaps scores, of other ministers are waiting to hop into their jobs at a moment's notice. They know their people know it. And their people know they know their people know it.

Consequence: a terrified parson and an over-confident parish that can run him into debt, if it chooses, up to his very ears.

Ah, but when clergymen are scarce, how quickly this will change! A church fortunate enough to

catch one will see that it hangs onto him like grim death. He will be precious, and treated accordingly.

And now observe a still brighter side of our sacred Malthusianism. With fewer ministers, we shall have fewer churches. An end of these miserable, aching, half-empty little meeting-houses, scattered everywhere as monuments to failure and inviting the jeers of the ungodly. Instead, combination — fewer churches but larger, all strong, all prosperous, all providing splendid opportunities for the splendid clergymen Church Economics, once applied, should produce.

Don't imagine that the pauperization of "mendicant friars" has ennobled the clergy. It has scared away many a fine, high-spirited lad, tarnished many a well-meaning student of divinity, and more than once attracted incompetents and weaklings.

Own up to it, brethren: business is business, and you can't jostle the normality of dollars and cents without jostling a lot more besides. You don't gain by that, you lose. You have theologues trying to get something for nothing, and then churches innocently working the same game. Not always, of course, yet too often.

But now I hear you ask what Church Economics intends to do with the funds at present employed in coaxing men into the ministry. Excellent; I am glad you spoke. We shall use the money in maintaining a kind of Carnegie Retiring Fund for superannuated clergymen.

That inspired philosopher, Henry Drummond, taught us to discover "natural law in the spiritual world," but economic laws are as natural as biologic laws, and all Church Economics demands of us, in order to make ours a magnificent profession, is that we stop tampering with natural, economic laws in the ecclesiastical world. So let us stop. Then our problem will solve itself.

We shall hear no more talk about "only inferior young men entering the ministry." Natural selection will give us the best. The half-hearted, the undevout, the feeble, the unfit, and the round pegs seeking square holes will never work their way to a Seminary or pay their way through one. We shall have made the ministry a dangerous calling for all but the fine, gifted, superior young fellows we want.

No trouble in attracting those. Hardship and self-sacrifice appeal to their manhood. They will brave it through, gladly. And think what inducements we shall hold out — a big congregation, the respect of the world, an enormous influence for good, an assured income, a pension to retire on!

How easily we can bring all this to pass! Pleading won't do it. Nothing is accomplished by trotting from college to college and telling "the best men" to turn aside from business, medicine, and the law, and become preachers. Little, if anything, is accomplished by telling dilatory churches to pay up or even to pay double what they now promise to pay. Still less is accomplished by telling comic wrecks and remnants of churches to combine and

be strong in the Lord. We are stacking up against forces mightier than mere words. But when we try deeds, instead of words, things will happen.

Let us be about it, brethren, with all speed. Who's afraid? Everything else will take care of itself if we rise up in our wrath against "aid" in Divinity Schools, free rooms in Divinity Schools, free tuition in Divinity Schools, subsidized ham and eggs in Divinity Schools. The Society for the Emancipation of Mendicant Friars is founded, now and in this place.

Glancing back over what I have written, I repent of bothering to storm as I did about "the consensus of opinion among the best German critics" and the system of instruction that unfits for the ministry. What waste of words, when simply putting the Seminaries on a normal business basis will correct all that! Do you imagine that young men sifted by a process of natural selection and paying real money will tolerate such organized and codified irrelevancy? Nay, brethren! They "won't stand for it."

Let us back the Society for the Emancipation of Mendicant Friars with the best pluck there is in us, and see the thing through.

Meanwhile, let us silence a few howls both outside the church and within it. To begin with, the howl that declares our profession's "loss of influence."

This, as much as any other one cause, is responsible for shunting away the most promising young men from the ministry. Yet, candidly, I do not

think it an entirely good howl. True, the clergyman is no longer the best educated man in town. Lawyers, doctors, teachers, and editors have brains as well furnished as his — better furnished in certain ways. They are specialists. But then, so is he. If he runs away from his own specialty and goes to fooling with theirs, what wonder if he makes himself ridiculous and “loses influence”? Many a misguided parson has done just that, talking science instead of religion, sociology instead of religion, politics instead of religion. There are even ministers who hold forth regularly on “topics of the day,” setting up as Professors of Things in General. It is they who have “robbed the ministry of its influence,” as people put it.

But see what happens when a clergyman has the wit to stick to his specialty! Crowds come flocking. He is a sensation. The novelty of a preacher caught in the act of preaching has a tip-top thrill in it. And so has that rarest of latter-day novelties, a sermon. You can hear the closing hymn three blocks off.

Don't tell me preaching has lost its power. The preacher who preaches has more power than ever — there is so little competition.

No, it is not entirely a good howl, this about “the ministry's declining influence,” nor is it a particularly good howl that bewails the decline of church-going. Not many years ago one of our popular magazines started a series called “The Spiritual Unrest” and attempting to show that churches were rapidly perishing. Soon, they would

be extinct. And yet you may recall that the series stopped, short, like Grandfather's clock, "never to go again." Why?

Because the United States Census Report came out. Lo and behold, more churches than of yore, more church-members, a bigger percentage of the population got hold of by the churches and more speedily. I felt like sitting down and writing the author of "The Spiritual Unrest" a long and jovial "Ha! Ha!"

But numbers are not everything, and it is not always easy to console the pessimists who deplore an undeniable predominance of women at service. Alack and alas! "men no longer go to church in these days." Whereas, in "the good old times" — etc., etc.

Personally, I have but few recollections of the Eighteenth Century, still fewer of the Seventeenth and its predecessors. But now and then I pull down a volume of sermons left over from those "good old times," and what do I read? "Alack and alas! Menne no longer goe to church in these dayes."

When people tell you the church is not what it used to be, you may answer, confidently, "No, it never was."

I could wish, of course, that there were as many hatless heads as be-flowered and be-feathered ones at service, but I am not going to tear out my hair because to a considerable extent I am a preacher to women. The other day, when Frederick Townsend Atwood, who edits our celebrated three-cent

newspaper, was chaffing me about that, I hit back by inquiring the proportion of women among his readers. "Roughly, four-fifths," he admitted. So he, too, was a preacher to women. Moreover, the novelists are, and the magazinists, and the writers of serious books.

Honestly, if I were to choose, and to make the choice from sense of duty and with an eye to results, I should prefer a congregation all women to a congregation all men. More would come of it.

You remember what befell Mr. Diamondstein in the story when he married that "beautiful uptown lady, but easy scared." In no time, every small Diamondstein got a Christian name in both senses, and was made over into a good little Catholic. Then, too, there is the case of a whole regiment of Tommy Atkinses who settled in a French village on the St. Lawrence and took to themselves wives, and lived happily ever after. You can find their grandchildren there now. Not a Protestant among them.

We get our religion from our mothers. So, when I look down from my pulpit upon feathers and ribbons and artificial roses, I am thinking of the men of to-morrow. I teach their teachers. And naturally, I am thinking of the women of to-morrow, also, and of the dear, noble, Christian women of to-day.

On the whole, then, I should not curl up with consternation if you could prove (which you can't) that the church is becoming more and more "feminized"; nor am I terrified when I hear that in "the

twilight of religion" (cunning little phrases, but absurd) Christianity itself is declining.

How we talk! You might suppose almost anything a match for Christianity. Geology was, when it doubted a universe created in six days of twenty-four hours each. Evolution was, when it described us as dignified monkeys. Even Christian Science was, when it stole our people by the tens of thousands! Proof enough that Christianity had lost its vigor.

Shades of Jevons, what logic! Fossils and monkeys did no harm, and all the rise of Eddyism proved was that, in many a parish, the cardinal doctrines of our faith had not been preached. Instead, sociology had, and municipal reform, and international comity, and ethics in a mild solution, and "topics of the day." Ministers, if they referred to Salvation, treated it as a phase of culture. "Conviction of sin" was not so much as aimed at. The Atonement? A mere dogma they made of that, while the Christ they preached was a rose-leaf Madonna, the natural (or rather, the unnatural) precursor of Mary Baker G. Eddy herself.

And think how we trembled for Christianity when America began to outgrow the Puritan Sunday! Whereas, not one single, solitary text anywhere in the New Testament or the Old connects a Puritan Sunday with Christianity. The story is this:

Converts from Judaism, the first Christians kept Saturday. Because it was on Sunday that Jesus rose from the dead, they kept Sunday also. Then,

Skip one page for page 345.

didn't. To quote the well-known ballad, "it was the dog that died."

And last of all came that worst of scares, the terrible World War. Think of it — Christians murdering one another by the millions! Never such a war! Never such slaughter! Causeless, too! Read all the White Papers, Orange Papers, Ultramarine Papers, and Bloody Crimson Papers, all the arguments, pretenses, excuses, and mendacities; the whole rubbish-heap put together can't justify the War or even explain it. So clergy and laity united in a groan of terrorized despair, "God help us, Christianity is no more!"

Pardon me, brethren, but I don't quite follow.

Who made that war? A handful of devils incarnate, who will burn in a hotter hell than any theologian has dared dream of.

But those victims, there in the trenches — what madness to say they renounced their religion! Take a case in point. Take the case of Hans Loeb, who, before the War broke out, raised cabbages in Rhineland.

Be square with Hans. War was the last thing he wanted. He wanted to nurse cabbages, live happy with Frau and Kinder, go to church, and say grace before meat in his Rhineland cottage. A gentle, sweet, affectionate, peaceful bumpkin was Hans. You will not find a better.

But Hans could not have what he wanted. A soldier by compulsion, he was not his own man, he was Von Kluck's. He put on his spiked helmet and gray uniform when forced to, kissed his Frau

and Kinder, blubbered a little, wondered a great deal, and marched away, praying fervently.

What, think you, was in Hans Loeb's soft heart, all this while? Hate? Malice? Ferocity? Murder? I will tell you.

Love!

Yes, love! Love of country, in a vague sort of way. In a vivid, keen, passionate way, love of wife and little ones. For them he would lay down his life. "Greater love hath no man."

Was that un-Christian? Wouldn't I have done the same for Gertrude and the girls? Wouldn't Ned? The diabolical thing about war is not the fighting of it through after it has started. It is starting it. And the curse of Europe was not its honest Hans Loeb, it was cliques of diplomats, war-ministers, and soulless monarchs, who, without his consent and against his will, could send out poor Hans to murder and be murdered.

What lunacy, this conclusion of ours that, just because despotism in the hands of the few can hurl the many to destruction, Christianity is doomed! Ridiculous! It has survived worse despotisms than any now rampant — for instance, Rome. And when all our modern despotisms have perished (speed the day!) Christianity will remain, still glorious, still regnant, its triumphs writ large in living hearts.

You see what I am pleading for, brethren — the note of courage. The Christianity that for nineteen centuries has ministered to a race "incurably religious" is not so easily wiped out as some would

when they found five work-days a week insufficient, they gave up the Jewish Saturday.

Our Sunday, accordingly, is a purely human institution, and we are treating it a good deal as Jesus treated Saturday. He softened the rigors of Rabbinism, and I think He is not displeased when we soften the rigors of Puritanism. But don't misunderstand me. No one deplores the un-Christian abuse of Sunday more than I do. If our

“Day of all the week the best,
Emblem of eternal rest,”

is to degenerate into a carnival, then give us back those Puritan rigors. Personally, I don't believe we are for either calamity. And even if Christians should go a step further than at present, I should not say Christianity was doomed. I should remember my friends the French Protestants, with whom I spent the last of my brief vacation abroad. Sunday morning, Monsieur and Madame and the *gosses* “sat under” Pastor Charles Wagner. In the afternoon, they frolicked in the Bois de Boulogne. Sunday evening, if they chose, they attended a party. Yet I have never known a family more devout. Spiritually, few of us Americans and even of us Puritans attain their level.

Why must we be always supposing the least innovation is enough to demolish Christianity? Not long ago, it was the bicycle. A dear Bishop actually forbade the women of his diocese to go wheeling, and I recall a sermon to “sweet girl graduates” in which, after citing the vision of Ezekiel,

the preacher raged because it was sometimes difficult at first glance to be certain as to the sex of "the living creature within the wheel." Awful! But haven't you noticed that, although the wheel is extinct, Christianity isn't? As it has been a match for the dread bicycle, I guess it will be a match for the dread automobile and for the dread comic-opera clothes fool women have been wearing around the streets.

Still, I can't deny that one or two of the false alarms that horrified us were far from trivial. For instance, when, all of a sudden it "struck sex o'clock" and Americans discovered that there was truth in the Scripture, "Male and female created He them." What a surprise! And what an orgy! Everything unmentionable got mentioned, not only out loud, but in mixed company and before children. Newspapers, magazines, even table-talk reeked with smut. Also with hypocrisy. Nominally to urge reform, actually to make money, editors put forth salacities by the carload. Nominally to help on the reform, actually to wallow in nastiness, people devoured the salacities and screamed for more. We seemed headed straight for the pig-gery by way of the garbage-cart. Ministers shook in their boots. No wonder! After preaching, "Blessed are the pure in heart," "Evil communications corrupt good manners," "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he," behold the result! "Oh! what's the use?" they wailed.

Presently, however, the filth-mongers were raising that self-same cry. Christianity survives, smut

Go back two pages for page 347.

very eyes, over and over again, without her suspecting it any more than he does?

You will call me a monomaniac, I fear, and yet I seriously believe that a remedy for the ills of the pastorless preacher will be forthcoming when we begin to understand and apply the new science of Church Economics, which, instead of feeding "mendicant friars," provides a Retiring Fund for Superannuated Clergymen. Why should not the best of those dignified pensioners become pastors to ministers?

The need, no one questions. If his holiness the Pope requires a confessor, how much more do we! Nor is the suggestion out of keeping with the spirit of our time. It merely introduces into the ecclesiastical world a custom already employed to advantage in the industrial world. Manufacturers have confessors. When a manufacturer gets the blues, he calls the "factory-doctor," who prowls through his plant, picks his machinery to pieces, quizzes his employees, examines his raw materials, inspects his finished products, investigates his shipping lists, his advertisements, his bright little games, his finances, and, naturally, his ledgers. If that "factory-doctor" is not a confessor, I'd like to know who is. At the conclusion of his questioning and cross-questioning, he says, bluntly, "Here are your virtues, and here, so far as I can discover, are your faults. Quit them, or sell out!"

What I want is a church-doctor, to do as much for me—a man thirty years my senior, a man

crowned with good works and ripened by a long life of Christly devotion — a man my superior in wisdom, in spirituality, in experience, in insight and consecration. I want to go to him with my perplexities. Especially, I want the right to ask him to come to me, and live with us weeks at a stretch, and show me the things that ought to have alarmed me and didn't. I want him to turn me inside out. I want to help him do it. And then I want him to say frankly, with a tenderness too affectionate to be merciful, "My son, here are your sins. Here is the malady that is blighting your soul, and limiting your usefulness, and harming the church you serve."

After that, I want him to pray with and for me, and bring me nearer the dear Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, to whom be glory and honor, now and forever more. Amen.

THE END

have us think. Come! Be strong in the Lord! Be dauntless! The very stars in their courses (not excepting that "last star of science") are fighting for you. Creeds may change, a little here, a little there; forms may change, and customs along with them; religion never. The same yesterday, to-day and to the end, it is imperishable because God is, and the soul, and the religious instinct. Ours is a city not made with hands, eternal in the heavens and on earth also.

The danger is not that our cause may fail us, it is that we may fail our cause.

For we are beset by manifold temptations — subtle, unseen perils, of a sort few laymen understand. Against the grosser sins, we are defended by the mere conventions of our calling, but this absence of struggle flings wide the door to sins less pardonable than the gross ones — self-righteousness, for instance, and conceit, and vanity, and intolerance, and insincerity, and moral cowardice, and that strange dulling of the spiritual perceptions that comes of our professional handling of things sacred. I speak from experience. When I tremble, it is because I fear the deterioration of my own soul, even while I am giving my best energies to "the cure of souls." I fear that I may yet deserve the bitter taunt, "He saved others, himself he cannot save," and that the day may come when I can no longer save others. For the minister's own spirituality is the measure and the limit of his power.

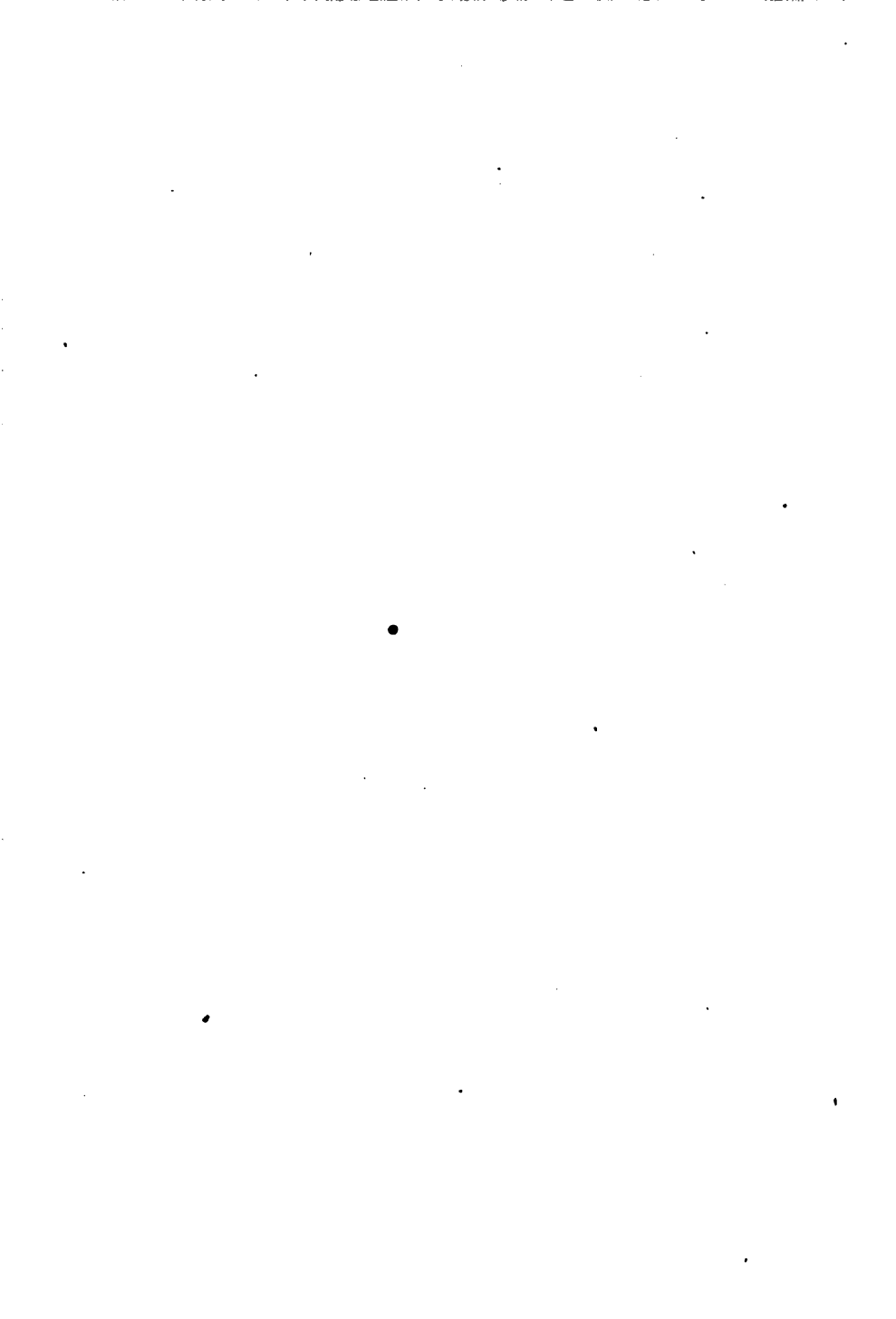
You know what it is I need. I need a pastor.

It is perhaps a rather curious confession, coming from a clergyman placed as I am. Unlike most preachers, I belong to a religious community. There are three of us, intimately associated. Then why have I not two pastors already, the Rev. Edward B. Archer for one and the Rev. Dear Departed in addition?

I suppose it is our very intimacy that prevents. Instead of being my pastors, they are only my instructors in Homiletics and Pastoral Theology. Archer has taken out of me a good many of my worst "platform" faults, while attempting to treat my awkwardness with "nabobs." In the kindness of his heart, the Dear Departed has kept after me pretty "faithfully" about my blunders when I try to get hold of young worldlings at the Parish House. Knowing them in his fine, rough-and-ready, boyish way, he has put me on my guard against a lot of false tactics that were spoiling my usefulness. But when it comes to dealing with me boldly as regards my personal shortcomings and my spiritual sins and the dangers that overhang my inner life, they simply can't, though these are the gravest of all.

To be sure, I have Gertrude, and I take my anxieties to her, often and often, and she is my guiding star. I owe everything to Gertrude. But a minister's wife can never quite serve as a minister's pastor. She loves him too blindly — oh, a great, great deal too blindly! Her king can do no wrong.

Can't he, though? And can't he do it before her



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